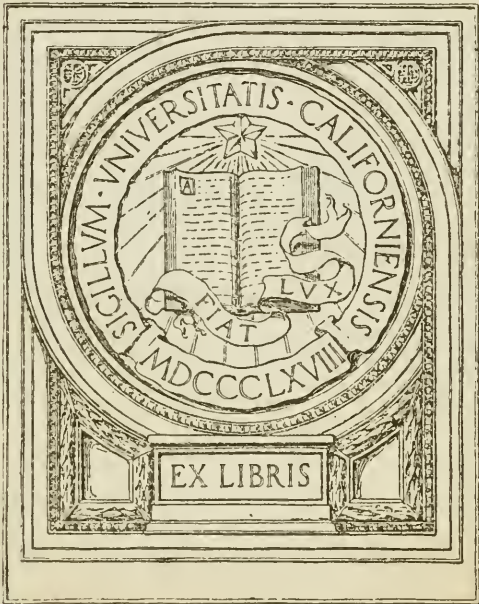




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# THE APOSTLE PAUL

AND

# THE PREACHING OF CHRISTIANITY

IN

# THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH.

BY

SIR RICHARD DAVIS HANSON,

CHIEF JUSTICE OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA,

AUTHOR OF "JESUS OF HISTORY," "LETTERS TO AND FROM ROME," ETC.



WILLIAMS AND NOR GATE,

14, HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON;  
AND 20, SOUTH FREDERICK STREET, EDINBURGH.

1875.

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## PREFACE.

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WHEN I published the "Jesus of History," I had no intention of returning to the subject of the early history of the Church; though in the interval between the completion and publication of that work, I had begun another, which I abandoned; portions of which were subsequently published under the title of "Letters to and from Rome." The resumption of the inquiry was first suggested to me by the "Saint Paul" of M. Renan; but I was then in England on a brief visit, and my time was too fully occupied to allow of any continuous attention to the subject. During my voyage to Australia, I sketched the outlines of a work that might, as I hoped, vindicate my conception of the character of the Apostle Paul and of his position in the early Church, and had begun to fill in the details; but in doing this, I found that there were questions raised by various incidents in his life, the answers to which did not appear to harmonize with my previous opinions. It therefore became necessary to re-investigate the subject from the beginning; and very shortly after my return, I undertook the task. The results of this investigation were, however, so different from what I had anticipated, that I feared lest the effect of any work I might write would be rather to derogate from the character of the

Apostle, than to free him from the charges made against him. I confess that I shrank from such a consequence, and for a time relinquished my inquiries. I not only admired, but I had felt almost a personal regard for him; and I had so completely accepted the view that he gives of himself and his opponents, that I looked upon him as the one man who gave dignity to the Apostolic age, and redeemed it from the charge of bigotry and narrow-mindedness. I was reluctant to continue an inquiry that threatened to compel me to change these opinions.

Having once entered upon the investigation, however, I did not like to abandon it, especially upon such grounds, and I gradually returned to the subject. My first results were embodied in an article which was published in an English periodical,<sup>1</sup> of, I believe, limited circulation, and attracted no attention. But I felt that to do justice to the subject as I had conceived it, would require that it should be treated in greater detail, and connected with the general history of the Church. And this is the object of the present work.

The view that I have taken of the character of the first disciples, and of the causes which led to the various measures adopted for their punishment and the repression of the society, differs greatly from that ordinarily entertained, and it must be left to the judgment of those who impartially examine the subject. It is the result of a tolerably wide range of observation, and of a belief in the general uniformity of human nature—that it does not greatly differ now from what it was in the first century of our era. Certainly, I should not be disposed to undervalue the influence which Christianity has exercised upon selected individuals; I have known too many of such persons to speak contemptuously of their lives or of their faith. And, of

<sup>1</sup> The Manchester Friend.

course, I cannot doubt that throughout the whole Christian world similar examples may be, and always have been, found. Nevertheless, the highest and best of these were not free from weaknesses and errors; and I fear it would be very unsafe to judge of believers as a body from these exceptional cases. If the few often fall below their ideal, as they would be the first to admit, the majority seldom or never reach it; and their faith shows itself rather in occasional moods of feeling, than in an abiding influence upon their lives. So far as we can ascertain, there was nothing in the character of the first converts to indicate any marked superiority in them over the present generation of Christians. The picture that Paul enables us to form of the proceedings of the brethren at Corinth at their church meetings, even assuming that all the manifestations were supernatural, is not one which would lead us to expect any special sobriety or order in their daily conduct, or to suppose that they would be distinguished by respect for their rulers, or by obedience to the law. Both of these virtues might be inculcated by the teacher, and yet neither of them be manifested in the converts. Perhaps we might rather imagine that the reaction from these ecstasies might leave them more open to temptation, and that the conscious possession of such powers might even inspire them with a feeling of contempt for the unconverted magistrates whom they were exhorted to obey. And the same gifts might be expected to lead to similar exhibitions, and to produce similar results, among the converts in all the great cities of the Empire, and possibly in Jerusalem itself.

With regard to the character of the Apostle Paul—his labours, his position in the Church, and the quarrels in which he was involved—the opinions at which I have arrived are very different from those I had at one time entertained, as will be seen by any

one who has read my former work; and they are different from those which are held by the majority of critics; almost as widely, indeed, from those of the late F. C. Baur and his school—if I may so speak of men who are independent inquirers—as from those of English orthodox writers. They have been formed independently, and, I fear, are destined to meet with slow acceptance; for I know how repugnant they were at first to myself, and with what reluctance they were ultimately adopted. I should have been far better pleased to be able to retain my original views; and it was only after a prolonged investigation, and repeated attempts to regard the subject under every aspect, that I acquiesced in those which I have endeavoured to set forth in the present volume. If erroneous, at least they are the result of patient, and, to the very best of my ability, strictly unbiassed labour. And I cannot but hope that they will ultimately commend themselves to those who fairly weigh the reasons by which they appear to me to be justified.

I have attempted not merely to depict the history, but also to estimate the doctrines, of the Apostle Paul as exhibited in his writings, but only in order to ascertain what it was that he designed to inculcate, and what relation his opinions bore to those of other parties in the Church. My inquiry, indeed, is intended to be strictly historical, and not in any degree theological. The further questions as to the conclusions warranted by particular arguments and illustrations, or by the general scope of his reasoning, though full of interest to those who look upon him as divinely commissioned to reveal saving truth, have no bearing upon my immediate object, and are therefore altogether passed over. Even, however, within the limited sphere to which I have confined myself, there are many difficulties arising out of the character of his mind and the peculiarities of his style. He



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does not state distinctly the thesis he wishes to support, and then adduce the arguments by which it is to be maintained. His own mental constitution and early training, and perhaps also the circumstances in which he was placed, were inconsistent with such a mode of procedure; so that we have to gather his object from a consideration of his arguments, and consequently run the risk of losing sight of the actual purpose in the multiplicity of collateral questions which he turns aside to discuss. Still less is he concerned to lay down any scheme of doctrine. Those whom he addressed, the actual members of existing churches, whom he describes as "foolish," "weak," and "base," men whom he could not feed with meat, did not need a system of theology, but immediate practical guidance; and that, I conceive, is what he sought to supply. But the manner in which he has discussed the various questions, readily lends itself to the formation of a system; for his fertility of imagination enabled him to see every subject under many different lights, and to illustrate it from as many different quarters. The very imperfection of his dialectical faculty tended to such a result; for it compelled him to present his arguments in various forms, each of which, though incomplete in itself, might tend to supplement the defects of the others. There is, consequently, a natural inclination to give symmetry and completeness to his reasonings, to fill up a hiatus in one Epistle by passages drawn from others, and to lose sight of the actual purport of the letters, in view of the conclusions they may be made to support. But this course, though natural, is likely to be misleading. Those, for instance, to whom the Epistle to the Philippians was addressed, were not supposed to know anything of his letters to the Galatians and Corinthians; so that the teaching in the one could not at the time be qualified or enlarged by the others.

And the same remark applies to almost all of the letters. This circumstance must, consequently, be borne in mind by any one who attempts to deal with the subject historically. Dealt with theologically, the case, no doubt, is different; for then Paul is only the mouthpiece of the Spirit of God, and his own immediate purpose is unimportant, excepting as a mere matter of curiosity. From this standpoint he probably could not fully know what the words he was impelled to write would ultimately signify, any more than the old prophets did when they prophesied beforehand of the coming of the Messiah.

I have accepted as genuine all the letters attributed to Paul—I should rather say written in his name—excepting the Pastoral; though feeling great doubts with regard to that to the Ephesians. And my non-acceptance of the Pastoral letters is founded not so much upon difficulties arising from their style and contents, as upon their standing altogether outside of the history of the Apostle. Perhaps too much stress has been laid upon apparent incompatibilities between the doctrines taught in different letters, and upon their seeming indications of a state of thought, or of church organization, which it is assumed did not exist at the period when they are supposed to be written; as though the same person might not pass through many phases of belief, and as though we were not profoundly ignorant of the circumstances of the early Church, and of the divergences and extravagances of opinion which the mere preaching of the word might excite. These inquiries have great subsidiary value, but we scarcely seem to be justified in drawing any unqualified conclusion from their results. And this is especially the case with regard to Paul. There appears to be a tendency to assume that his mental history was altogether exceptional, that there was neither alteration nor progress in his mind subsequently to the

great change produced (or typified) by the vision of Jesus on the road to Damascus; so that the opinions which he formulates in his four principal letters were held from the beginning, and were either the cause of his joining the Church, or were divinely revealed to him at that time, and remained unchanged to the end. This view, which has led many reasoners to reject all but these four letters, is not in conformity with our experience in analogous cases, and it is not warranted by anything that Paul has written. He certainly did not at any time claim for himself perfection or completeness either of life or of doctrine. Probably he would have regarded it as a grave reproach that he should be represented as having lived so many years, and as having passed through so many varied experiences since his conversion, without learning many new truths and discarding some old errors. And I have endeavoured to show the relation in which his various letters stand to the successive phases of his career.

In this, as in my former work, I have had to examine the question of preaching to the Samaritans; and here, as well as there, I have felt myself compelled to reject the story as unhistorical. In the former case, the difficulties were connected with the beliefs and feelings of the Samaritans; while here they are chiefly connected with those of the Jews. The improbabilities which I have indicated may not be such as to entitle us to disregard authentic contemporary evidence, but they appear fatal to the reception of mere legendary tales such as we have. For it is not an improbability affecting the conduct of two or three persons, which might be capable of removal if we knew all the circumstances, but one affecting large bodies of men, where individual peculiarities may be safely left out of sight. It arises from our knowledge of the relative feelings of two peoples—feelings which had subsisted for centuries—and which con-

tinued to exist long subsequently. Any argument that may be employed to diminish the difficulty on one side, necessarily aggravates it on the other. Mr. Sanday<sup>1</sup> has contested one ground of my objection to the account of the visit of Jesus and his reception by the Samaritans given in the fourth Gospel, by alleging that they did expect a Messiah, the prophet of whom Moses wrote ; and he suggests that the movement described by Josephus,<sup>2</sup> which was summarily suppressed by Pilate, might have been due to the result of that visit. But the prophet predicted by Moses, whom the Samaritans are reported as expecting, was not the King of the Jews, nor the Messiah which is called Christ ; nor was he to be of the seed of Daniel, nor of the tribe of Judah. He was to declare the law of Jehovah with authority, but he was not to exercise regal power ; and, above all, he was to be of their brethren. Unless the whole history of the mutual relations of the two nations is a fiction, it was impossible that the Samaritans could have regarded the Jews as their brethren, or have supposed that the prophet whose advent they expected was to be a Jew. If they had believed, as probably they did, that he was to teach all the descendants of Jacob, they would also have believed that he would teach what their own version of the Scriptures proclaimed—the sanctity of Mount Gerizim, and their own consequent superiority ; which teaching the Jews were to accept on pain of being cut off from the congregation. And it sadly lowers the conception we are taught to form of the high spiritual effects of the direct intercourse of the Samaritans with the Christ himself, that it should in so short a time have resulted in an insurrectionary movement, ending in the slaughter of thousands.

<sup>1</sup> *The Authorship and Historical Character of the Fourth Gospel*, p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> *Ant.* xxviii. 4, 1.

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The subsequent history of the Samaritans, so far as any inference can be drawn from it, confirms the view I have taken; for not merely is there no notice of the existence of any Christian church among them, but they are described as exhibiting a special hatred to Christianity. Justin, who was himself a Samaritan, is obviously unaware that the Gospel had ever been preached or a church founded among them. Subsequent writers also dwell upon their notorious hostility to the faith, without qualifying their censure by any hint of the existence of a believing minority. On the assumption, therefore, of the truth of the New Testament narratives, we must conclude that the church in Samaria, though founded originally by Jesus himself, and afterwards enlarged by Philip and fully organized by the two chief Apostles, died out in little more than a single generation, without leaving a trace of its existence. And this we can hardly assume. However difficult, then, it may be to explain the circumstance that two separate and independent writers should represent the Gospel as having been preached in Samaria—the one by Jesus himself, and the other by Philip—excepting upon the assumption that a church had been founded there, it appears that this explanation is excluded. The difficulty is lessened by the circumstance that the writer of the Acts implicitly negatives the story in the Gospel. Outside of the New Testament, the Samaritans appear as implacable foes of the Christians, whom they must, apparently, have regarded as a sect of the Jews, inheriting their hopes and enmities. And they paid the price of their persistent hostility. They had been subject to a succession of Pagan rulers—Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian, and Roman—and they had occasionally suffered deeply at the hands of their masters; without, however, any permanent diminution of their prosperity or numbers. But they



never recovered from the measures directed against them by the Christian Emperors of the East, provoked by an exhibition of their enmity to the orthodox faith. From that time they steadily declined, and they are now almost extinct.

In referring to the persecutions of the Church, I have endeavoured to be just to both sides. The Acts and all ordinary Church histories assume that the Christians were uniformly and absolutely right, and the authorities, whether Jewish or Roman, completely in the wrong. But neither of these assumptions appears to be warranted by our present experience. I have not much to say with regard to the wisdom of Governments, any more than with regard to that of the people they govern. But I have not ordinarily found that men are more foolish when they are placed in a position of authority, than they had been in their private capacity; or, indeed, that they are less prudent and sagacious in the conduct of public affairs, than the average of mankind, including their critics, are in their own. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that they do often commit mistakes—they cannot avoid doing so—which by reason of their position may occasion great hardship. I seem, however, to have observed that the sense of responsibility arising from the possession of power does tend to make Governments desirous to act justly, and to raise them above petty jealousies and enmities. And whatever deductions may be made from this estimate on account of the exceptional position of the Romans in Judæa, which was somewhat analogous to that of the English in India, it at least authorizes us to assume that there was some seemingly adequate motive for all public measures. The Romans were harsh and overbearing, and profoundly indifferent to suffering when the security of their rule was at stake; but they had as rulers many of the better qualities of Englishmen; as it may be feared that



in our government of dependencies we have some of their defects. They did not trouble themselves to inquire into the grounds of any new doctrine that might be taught; and they would have regarded the doctrine itself, and the miracles (if any) by which it was supposed to be authenticated, with contemptuous indifference; just as an English resident would regard a report of miracles at the tomb of a Mohammedan or Hindu saint in support of some new development of either creed. They would only notice the doctrine when its teaching appeared to threaten the public tranquillity; but they interfered to repress disorder, and they punished disobedience to the law whenever it was brought under their notice.

In publishing this work, I do not anticipate for it any wide circulation; that, I fear, is forbidden by the subject and method. The method will repel the majority of those who feel an interest in the subject, and the subject will probably have little interest to most of those who would admit the propriety of the method. But I shall be satisfied if its success equals that of my former work; if, that is, it is recognized by impartial inquirers as an independent contribution to the elucidation of an important epoch in history, and as entitled to consideration by any one who wishes fully to investigate the subject. Of course, I must expect that those who regard the Bible as divinely inspired and infallibly accurate, and whose inquiries are directed, not to ascertain the truth of the incidents it relates, but only to establish their credibility, will regard it with repugnance, and even with contempt. And the effort that I have made to be impartial—to do equal justice to the motives and conduct of all parties—the pretence of impartiality, as it will be regarded, will only deepen these feelings. For this impartiality is of itself a tacit condemnation of their fundamental position. But the work is not

addressed to such persons; for I have no common ground upon which to appeal to them. I can only build upon the observed course of nature, and the manner in which men act in ordinary circumstances, and apply the same tests to events alleged to have happened within a limited sphere eighteen centuries ago, that I should apply to similar events if related now, or if described as having occurred at the same date in Egypt or in India; while they assume an entirely exceptional condition within this sphere, in which not only are miracles to be looked for as a matter of course, but in which the motives and feelings that habitually influence human conduct are suspended or changed, not only in those who are the subjects of the Divine afflatus, but in those also with whom they are brought into contact. The reasons, therefore, that weigh with me have no value with them; and I quite confess their inadequacy. I may occasionally feel surprise at the seeming inconsistency in some who upon all other subjects, appear fully imbued with the modern scientific spirit, especially when they proffer their present subjective impressions in proof of the objective reality of events so long past; but that is all. My chief wonder is, that such persons should trouble themselves to read works which from their standpoint are necessarily worthless. Probably they do not read them; any more than I should read an elaborate work to prove that the world was created in six literal days, six thousand years ago. I might glance at it to see the nature of the arguments, but should most likely be satisfied with a glance; and such, I suspect, is the case with them.

My authorities for the chief portion of the present work are the books of the New Testament itself; for they afford the only direct testimony with regard to the life of Paul and the condition of the early Church. These have been supplemented by the

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writings of the Fathers in Clark's Ante-Nicene Library, and by Josephus and the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius, in translations. Of modern works to which I am indebted, I may mention those of Professor Jowett and of Dean Stanley, and those of Messrs. Conybeare and Howson, and of M. Renan. Those of the three last have furnished many valuable suggestions, and have supplied information that would otherwise have been inaccessible; and they throw great light upon the circumstances, institutions, and previous beliefs of the people to whom Paul preached. The latest works of M. Renan especially have been of great service to me. It will not be found that my views are based upon his; and in his case, as in that of Messrs. Conybeare and Howson, I have scarcely ever referred to his writings except to express my dissent; but I have felt how often he has succeeded in placing in a clear light the nature of the questions raised by the story, and how far he has gone in furnishing the materials upon which the answer depends. And my sense of the service he has rendered to future inquirers has grown upon me in following him over the ground he has traversed. I think, indeed, that his views in many respects would have been modified had he been called upon to take an active part in the administration of affairs, or compelled in actual practice to estimate the value and bearing of testimony; just as those of Messrs. Conybeare and Howson would be if they could occupy an impartial standpoint, from which they might regard the New Testament writings as they would writings outside of the canon, and Paul as they would an earnest but impulsive preacher of novel doctrines at the present day. With the two latter, however, this is impossible from their position; and, perhaps, in the case of M. Renan, what he might have gained on one side would have been lost on the other. We must be satisfied to take him

as he is, recognizing his critical acumen, his wide and varied learning, his unwearied research, his fearless adherence to his convictions, and his literary and artistic taste, and pardoning him the defects of his qualities.

The present work is published with my name. In publishing my former work anonymously, I was influenced principally by a desire not to give pain to old friends (many of whom, alas! I have since lost), but partly also by a reluctance to cut myself off from the society of persons whose acquaintance I valued, and with most of whose objects and aims I was able to sympathize. There had, indeed, been a time when, in common with many others in the present day, I had been something like Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of truth to the best of my ability, but secretly, for fear of the Christians; but that time had long passed. Still, though I did not conceal my opinions, I never paraded them, and I was careful not to express them so as to wound the feelings of others, or disturb the peace of mind of those who were happy in believing, but felt themselves unequal to the task of investigating the grounds of their belief. With a few mental suppressions, I was able to join in the prayers, and I often had great pleasure in listening to sermons in the churches, of the denomination with which from my childhood I had been connected; the old words still bringing back something of the old feelings. For, after all, a liberal Christianity appears to me to be among the highest expressions of our conceptions of God, and human responsibility and human destiny, that have been reached. Doubtless, it is only regulative; but it satisfies the need that so many feel for a definite Object of faith and worship, and a definite rule in morals; and it furnishes an intelligible basis for personal virtue, and for the practice of justice and benevolence. And as I neither anticipate nor desire

a time when mankind in general will be content without a religion, I am willing to acquiesce in it until some better form has been devised; trying in the mean time to contribute my quota to the elucidation of its origin and growth, as a means to its purification or replacement. I was thus able to associate with religious men upon terms of friendship, and to co-operate with them in many of their projects, keeping in the background matters in which my views differed from theirs, excepting in those cases in which silence might be construed into approval. This, however, has become more difficult now, and I fear will be almost impossible for the future. But such a result I am, perhaps, bound to encounter. I believe my views to be substantially true, and I do not feel justified in depriving them of the support, such as it may be, of my name.

I have in this work, as in the former, to bespeak indulgence for errors, not having an opportunity of correcting it in its passage through the press.

R. D. H.

WOODHOUSE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA,  
*June 30, 1875.*





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Page 20, note,	<i>for</i> 1 Cor. xi.,	<i>read</i> x.
„ 46, line 19, note,	„ Sulvian,	„ Salvian.
„ 109, note <sup>2</sup> ,	„ Acts ix. 37,	„ 20.
„ 139, { line 7 from bottom of page, }	„ decree,	„ degree.
„ 197, note <sup>1</sup> ,	„ 2 Cor. i. 18,	„ 19.
„ 287, note,	„ 1 Cor. xv. 52 ff.,	„ 51.
„ 288, line 28,	„ ψυχικον,	„ ψυχικον.
„ 307, line 29,	„ (xi. 22),	„ 21.
„ 316, note,	„ 2 Cor. i. 17,	„ 16.
„ 321, note,	„ 1 Cor. vii.,	„ viii.
„ 377, note <sup>1</sup> ,	„ Jude iv.,	„ vv.
„ 425, note <sup>3</sup> ,	„ Acts xiv.,	„ xvi.

# THE APOSTLE PAUL

AND

## THE PREACHING OF CHRISTIANITY.

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### INTRODUCTION.

Obscurity of origins of Christianity—Small sphere embraced by the Acts—Misleading effect—Probable that action of Apostles more important and their character higher than is often assumed—Labours of Paul less important relatively—Conduct of James in relation to Paul not injurious to Church—Acts of Apostles—Its value independent of authorship—Principal portion composed at second-hand—Obvious omission of important incidents—If Luke author, form of narrative implies that he thought Paul wrong—Or possibly Paul wished to keep disputes out of sight—Sources of information—Journals of missionaries and minutes of meetings of churches—Object of work—Main object to do justice to Paul—The work essentially a Pauliad—No character introduced but such as are brought into contact with Paul in his letters or in Acts—Parallel between Acts of Paul and of Peter account for some—Questions raised in connection with Paul for others—Vision to Peter and voice obeyed by him—Peter eats with Gentiles, asking no questions—Conduct ratified by Church—Stephen—James—John—Philip—The two latter probably at and near Ephesus when Paul had taught—Parallel between acts of Philip and those of Paul—Selection of characters and incidents only thus to be accounted for—Character of Peter so depicted as to rebut charges of Paul—Effect of this—Author uncertain, possibly Luke, but more probably later compiler—Present work historical—Authorities doubtful—Writings of believers in the interest of their belief—Nature of their beliefs—Demoniacal possession—Conduct of Apostles—Value of Paul's statements as to nature of Jesus and purposes of God—Miracles, if not incredible, improbable in proportion to rarity—Nature of evidence—Circumcision apparently necessary condition of miracles and inspiration—Progress of Christianity—Difficulties to be surmounted exaggerated—No Church claiming to be universal and supreme—Local worships—No inquisition—Persecutions at first occasional and limited—Always partial—Intolerance to Christians

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provoked by their own intolerance—Contrast between condition of countries in which Paul preached at that time and at the present—Actual operation of Christianity—Necessarily lowered when embraced by multitudes—Extracts from Taylor's "Ancient Christianity"—Apparent prospect of triumph of Christianity—Not the result of Christian virtues—Later history of the faith suggests imperfection at the beginning.

FEW events are involved in deeper obscurity than the first establishment of Christianity. And even if we were able to accept the various narratives contained in the Acts of the Apostles as literally true, the case would scarcely be altered; for the light they throw upon certain selected incidents and persons only renders more conspicuous the darkness that shadows the rest. We are told something of the original organization of the church at Jerusalem, and of the persecutions it endured—a little of Philip and John, and James and Stephen, and Barnabas and Silas—something more of Peter, and most of all of Paul: but we know nothing of any others of the Apostles, and nothing of the various disciples who carried the knowledge of the Gospel to the Gentile world. And the field of action is correspondingly limited. Outside of Palestine it is almost exclusively confined within the south-western portion of the peninsula between the Euxine and the Mediterranean; embracing in addition a few points near the coast-line of Macedonia, together with Athens, Corinth, and the Isle of Cyprus. Neither Mesopotamia, Arabia, Egypt, Cyrene, Carthage, Spain, nor Gaul, is referred to, and Italy is only mentioned in connection with Paul's journey as a prisoner to Rome. As, however, Paul found churches (for wherever there were brethren, there was a church) both at Puteoli and Rome on his arrival at those places, we may conjecture that similar churches existed in many of the towns of importance, not only along the coasts of the Mediterranean, but also in the countries accessible from Judæa by land. But of the individuals by whom these churches were founded scarcely any record remains. Tradition, indeed, assigns to Andrew and Philip the evangelization of the places that, according to the Acts and to his own statements, had originally received the Gospel from Paul; and it is quite

possible that, after his imprisonment, or after his discussion with Peter, they might have been settled where the legend places them — Andrew in Cappadocia, Bithynia, and Galatia, and Philip in Hierapolis, from which place he exercised authority over the surrounding district. We are further told that Peter visited Corinth and Rome, and that John lived for many years in Ephesus. And besides this, that Matthias preached the Gospel in Arabia; Thomas in India; Matthew in Ethiopia; James, son of Alphæus, in Egypt; Simon Zelotes in North Africa; and Judas, the son of Thaddæus, in Mesopotamia; but these last statements rest almost entirely upon the doubtful testimony of Nicephorus.<sup>1</sup> Outside of the Apostles, almost the only name mentioned as the founder of a church is Mark, who is said to have founded that of Alexandria, of which he was the first bishop. But with regard to the rest, although the results of their labours remained, their names and their history are irretrievably lost to us.

This is a circumstance which is at once apparent, and which no one would be concerned to question; but there is one consequence that appears to result from it which all historians are apt to overlook. There is almost necessarily a false perspective in the picture we frame, which renders it altogether illusive. An episode assumes the place of the main action; and that which very possibly was only an eddy in the great stream, is so presented to us that we are almost inevitably led to regard it as the principal current. While the new faith was silently invading the centres of political life and of philosophic thought, our attention is directed to the obscure churches of Galatia and Macedonia; and, while the Apostles were engaged in the task of evangelizing the world, we see nothing but the labours of Paul. So far as our information is derived from the New Testament, we might well suppose, as some modern writers have assumed, that the work of the Twelve was confined to Palestine and its immediate vicinity; and that, after a few early efforts, they

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Pressensé's *Early Ages of Christianity*.

remained idly in Jerusalem, content to leave the task of preaching to the Gentiles to their new colleague, and to subsist upon the free-will offerings of converts whom he and men like him had attracted to the Church. Or, when we are able to perceive traces of their influence, it appears to show itself chiefly in the form of a narrow-minded attempt to limit the freedom of the Church, and to impose the Jewish law upon all converts, and that in contravention of a compact which they had themselves sanctioned. But a little reflection may show that, however important the action of Paul may have been in itself, and however profound the influence that his writings have exerted upon the creed of the Church, they were but a small portion of the agency that was then employed for the spread of the Gospel; while a deeper investigation may even lead to the conclusion that their part in the work was very far less than we should be at first disposed to imagine. And this may suggest that the action of the Twelve was neither so insignificant in amount nor so narrow in principle as it has sometimes been represented.

There can be but few persons indeed who are not more or less conscious of a feeling of surprise, in passing from the Gospels and the first chapter of the Acts, at the entire absence of information as to the part taken by the Apostles in the foundation of the Church. In the Gospels there is a description of their appointment by Jesus, and of their being specially authorized to preach the Word. It is to them that the command is given in the first Gospel, after the resurrection, to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles; and in the third, though they are to tarry in Jerusalem until they are endowed with power from on high, this power is to enable them, as the chosen witnesses of the resurrection, to preach repentance and remission of sins in the name of Christ to all nations. And in the Acts they are promised that they shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, and shall then be witnesses to Jesus in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. In spite, however, of these notices, which appear intended to prepare us for



their assumption of a prominent, if not an exclusive, position in the work of diffusing the Gospel, we literally learn nothing in the Acts as to the labours of any one of them outside of the immediate vicinity of Judæa; and of only two even in this restricted sphere. And what makes the case more singular is, that when we pass to the writings of the early Fathers, we find the Apostles occupying the position we should have been antecedently disposed to assign to them, and described as the instruments of evangelizing the world. So that not only should we infer from the Gospels that they must have been the chief agents in preaching Christ—for it appears impossible that otherwise so much importance should have been attached to their appointment, or that commands and promises so express should have been attributed to Jesus—but we find that this inference is fully borne out by early Christian writers. Whatever, therefore, may have been the motive for the silence which the author of the Acts has preserved upon the subject, we cannot suppose that it resulted either from their inactivity or pure ignorance on his part. It is scarcely possible, for instance, that when he wrote, all traces could have been lost of the labours of those at least whom Papias enumerates:<sup>1</sup> Andrew, Peter, Philip, Thomas, James, John, and Matthew; even if the others, preaching in different regions, were outside of the sphere of his inquiries; for those to whom Papias referred in order to learn what these Apostles had said, would also have been able to relate something also of what they had done.

With regard also to the character of the Apostles, we may observe a singular inconsistency in the views of many modern writers. There is a tendency even with those who regard the subject under its historical aspect, to elevate Jesus to the highest point which humanity can attain, at any rate in moral conceptions and spiritual insight, bringing him to the very verge of the supernatural—a tendency with which it is easy to sympathize, even while believing it to have no adequate historical

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, H. E., B. iii. c. 39.

basis. And yet the same persons disparage the Apostles whom he selected and commissioned, representing them as indolent, exclusive, and bigoted. It is not merely that this disparagement necessarily reacts upon the opinion we form of Jesus himself; since, if such was the character of his chosen companions, what must have been his own, and how poor his power of looking below the surface, even with his daily associates; but it affects the very grounds upon which such writers justify the elevated nature they assign to him. For the only persons who could know what he really was, what he taught, and what he purposed, were these very Apostles. To impeach their character, consequently, detracts from the value of their testimony. It would indeed compel us to believe that the picture of Jesus presented even in the earliest Gospels was not drawn by those who had known him during his public life, but was an idealized representation framed by later disciples. This, however, seems an unwarrantable assumption, since, though we cannot deny the existence of an idealizing tendency, we believe that the earliest picture, which is substantially preserved to us in the Synoptical Gospels, was due to the report of the Apostles. But then they must have been able to understand and sympathize with his character and his teaching as thus presented, and cannot have been the mere bigoted Jews that M. Renan and the late F. C. Baur, to mention two only out of many, are disposed to imagine.

And a corresponding misconception appears to exist with regard to the labours of Paul and the opposition he encountered. Even so clear a thinker as M. Renan writes as though the action taken by the church of Jerusalem, under the leadership of James, in, as he supposes, organizing a counter-mission against Paul, had perilled the progress of Christianity and threatened its existence.<sup>1</sup> And yet he admits that the opposition was almost entirely successful, so that the very churches founded by Paul fell away from him; while, nevertheless, Christianity con-

<sup>1</sup> Saint Paul, 288.

tinued to spread with undiminished vigour. And though, outside the sphere of Paul's labours, the authority of the Apostles was unresisted, and the brethren in every place accepted from them the rites they were to practise and the tenets they were to believe, yet there is no hint of any attempt to enforce the observances against which he protests, or of any obstacle to the spread of the faith, because of the yoke imposed upon converts. Whatever opinion, consequently, may be formed of the character of James, or of his conduct in regard to the mission of Paul, it appears impossible to regard his measures outside the sphere of that mission as impolitic or injurious. And within that sphere we cannot suppose that they had any other object than that of inducing the disciples who had been brought into the Church by the instrumentality of Paul to submit to the same rules as those that were observed by other Gentile disciples; since no reason can be assigned why any exceptional strictness should be observed in their case. And however trivial some of the practices imposed might be in themselves, they formed a visible bond of union among the brethren, and helped to maintain that separation between the Church and the world which it was then important to preserve. At the same time, the success of these measures kept in or brought into full communion the churches which Paul had founded with all other churches, and prevented the differences between his teaching and that of the Twelve from developing into a schism, as apparently at one time threatened to be the case.

In suggesting this explanation of the motives and conduct of James, we pronounce no opinion upon the merits of the scheme of doctrine propounded by Paul in vindication of his own conduct. Nor is this now necessary. It was not then a question of doctrine, but of discipline; not of belief, but of conduct. Both might be to a certain extent involved, but only so far as the doctrine and belief might be urged as an excuse for disregarding the observances which the Church had imposed, or for lapsing into licentiousness. Under other aspects, the questions

raised were comparatively unimportant. So long as a Gentile believed in the one true God, and in his Son Jesus, the Christ, who had been raised from the dead and was the destined founder of the kingdom of heaven, was baptized into his name, observed the abstinences prescribed by the Church, and lived in obedience to the greater commandments of the Law, he might entertain almost any speculative views as to the grounds of his belief, and no one would inquire into them. The Church had not yet formulated her creed, probably not upon any point;<sup>1</sup> certainly not upon any but the unity of God and the sonship and resurrection of Jesus, and the resurrection of the faithful at his re-appearing. Room was left, consequently, for innumerable varieties of opinion upon all matters which did not trench upon these essential doctrines; and it is probable that many of the heresies of the second century existed in germ within the Church itself long before the termination of the first. But there was a compact and well-defined organization, due presumably to the action of the Twelve, which secured the unity of the body from the beginning, and which enabled it to eliminate from time to time, as heretical, all opinions that failed to commend themselves to the majority. That in this process many true doctrines should be rejected, and many erroneous retained or admitted, is no more than might be expected, considering the mental condition of the individuals by whom the selection was made. But we may believe, on the whole, that the advantages of this organization greatly outweighed its defects, so far as the interests of the society were concerned, and the result has fully vindicated the policy of the men by whom it was established. And in this work the chief share appears to belong to James.

In any attempt to sketch the founding of Christianity, it is consequently impossible to obtain completeness or accuracy. By far the larger portion of the history is an absolute blank: we only know that Christ was preached, because we find Christian

<sup>1</sup> Unless in so far as this was involved in the credo repeated by the neophyte on baptism.

churches existing; in some matters we can vaguely conjecture the course of events; in some we must rely upon uncertain inferences from necessarily imperfect data; while here and there, principally in connection with the history of the Apostle Paul, we have materials from which we can draw reliable conclusions. But where our information is most ample, we must be sure there will be many circumstances, some perhaps of capital importance, that lie altogether outside of our sphere of vision, and that we cannot restore even conjecturally. We may, however, hope to seize and exhibit some of the leading characteristics of the history, and to indicate something of the true relations and proportion of the events we describe. And at least we may escape the misleading effect which necessarily results from exhibiting a part as though it were the whole.

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As the Acts of the Apostles is our only authority for a large portion of the history, it is necessary to examine the question of the weight to which it is entitled, and this question is to a great extent independent of that of authorship. If we suppose, with M. Renan and all orthodox commentators, that it was written by Luke, it is obvious that he must have compiled the greater part at second-hand, from traditions or documents existing in the community, or from what he had been told by Paul or his companions; and that in those parts in which he may be supposed to have had most ample means of knowledge he has omitted many incidents, the omission of which greatly affects the general character of the history. And if we suppose it to be the work of some unknown author writing at a later period, we must admit that he possessed original documents, parts of which he has faithfully reproduced, and we may believe that he had access to trustworthy materials then still existing in the Church. No critic, however conservative, can, we should imagine, assert that the book is throughout the production of an eye-witness, or that it contains a complete account of the



incidents it professes to describe; and none, however destructive, can deny the possession and employment of authentic sources of information.

With regard to the larger portion of the work, we can only judge of its credibility by the intrinsic probability of its statements, and by their agreement with each other and with the known position of the Church at the time. There are also portions describing scenes in the life of Paul which we are able to test by his own writings, and it must be confessed that the first impression produced by the application of this test is in a high degree unfavourable to its trustworthiness. The picture it draws of his position is noticeably different from that which we should construct for ourselves from his own statements, and the studied omission of everything that might indicate the existence of dissensions in the Church itself, whether between Paul and other Apostles, or between Paul and "false teachers," or between parties formed in the bosom of individual churches, shows it to be essentially unreliable, whenever we may suppose that the author has a purpose to serve. If he were a companion of Paul, he must probably have witnessed some of the conflicts excited by his pretensions. Certainly he must have heard descriptions of them, for Paul was not a person to pour out his complaints in his letters and be silent upon them in the familiar intercourse of travel. Often must he have recounted the particulars of the memorable scene at Antioch, when he withstood Peter to the face; must have dwelt upon the nature of the opposition that finally drove him from Ephesus, and have vindicated his own claims against the detractions of the false teachers, whether at Corinth or elsewhere. And if, as the current theory implies, he was aware of the composition of the third Gospel,—for Luke could not have written it while in his company without his knowledge,—then he must have looked forward to the time when a narrative should be published that rendered justice to the originality of his views of the Gospel, and that vindicated his apostolical independence and dignity. And yet there is



not one word to show that Paul stood in any different relation to the Law from that of the other Apostles; or that he claimed to be an Apostle by special divine appointment, or at all; or that his teaching was altogether independent of that sanctioned by the Twelve or by the church at Jerusalem,—matters upon which Paul especially insists, and to which he obviously attaches a very high importance. It is impossible, therefore, to place any reliance upon the general view that the Acts presents of the life of Paul, at any rate during the last period of his missionary labours. It may state nothing that did not occur, though this is doubtful; but even then the story would be only one of the half truths which are often more deceptive and more difficult to unravel than an entire falsehood. We are indeed able partially to supply the omitted colours, but only partially; for Paul's letters are written at distant intervals, and, with the single exception of that to the Galatians, they only refer indirectly and by way of allusion to the incidents of the struggle, and the statements they contain must be accepted with great reserve.

If we were to regard Luke as the author, it would seem to follow that he regarded Paul as entirely in the wrong in the various disputes in which he was engaged with members of the Church, and that he had written his history in such a manner as to throw a veil over Paul's assumptions and his violence; so that the record of the great services he had rendered to the cause of Christ should not be disfigured by any description of the conflicts those had provoked. He, Luke, must, in that case, have felt that Paul could not rightly claim the rank of Apostle; for although he tacitly vindicates his pretensions by exhibiting him as exercising the peculiar functions of the office, he has by implication so defined the conditions of Apostleship in describing the election of Matthias as to exclude Paul, and he has limited the number to twelve. And there is no hint of Paul's appointment to the office, or of his being recognized by the Church in that character.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The reference to Barnabas and Paul as Apostles (Acts xiv. 14) is an implicit contradiction of Paul's peculiar claim.

He must have supposed Paul to be altogether wrong in the case of Titus, for he has suppressed the incident, and describes him immediately afterwards as circumcising Timothy. It may be said, indeed, that his omission to refer to the dispute at Antioch was caused by his desire to ignore the very existence of dissensions within the Church; but this implies that he must have thought that Paul was wrong in the manner in which he afterwards referred to the subject. The description, too, of the Council at Jerusalem is so written as to imply the total inaccuracy of Paul's account of the same transaction, and is, indeed, just such a representation of his position and conduct, and of the action of the Apostles and of the Church, as we might suppose Paul to have had in view in writing to the Galatians, and against which his own version is an emphatic protest. It would be difficult indeed to mark more strongly than the writer has done the subordinate position which in his view, or in the traditions or records of the Church which he followed, Paul occupied at the time, and the broad line that then separated him from the Twelve; and as Luke could not have been ignorant of Paul's own ideas on the subject, especially of his claim to an independent mission, which had been sanctioned by the leaders of the Church, it would really seem that the account could only have been penned for the express purpose of negating these pretensions. The various schemes that have been proposed for reconciling the two accounts, or for proving that they do not need reconciliation, show plainly how easy it would have been for the writer to have so framed his narrative as to vindicate Paul's independence and Apostleship, without suggesting the existence of any but superficial differences, breaking out for the moment, but healed as soon as they arose. The mere desire to exhibit a picture of substantial unity could not, therefore, have dictated such a narrative as the present; that, it would seem, can only be due to the conviction of the author that in these particulars Paul was essentially wrong.

There is another hypothesis which may perhaps be entitled to

consideration, though it scarcely appears adequate to account for the actual form of the work. If the writer were Luke (or the disciple, whoever he was, whose journal is partially copied), it must be remembered that he first joined Paul at Troas on his second missionary journey, and quitted him shortly afterwards at Philippi. This was before the dispute at Antioch, and when Paul was travelling in company with Silas, a special delegate of the church at Jerusalem, as the recognized agent of the church of Antioch, having shortly before received the right hand of fellowship from Peter and James and John, that he should go to the Gentiles. At this time, consequently, he could have no motive to assert his own independence or to disparage the authority of the Twelve. After this, the writer did not join Paul again until he had returned to Macedonia from his three months' stay in Greece, when he was about to visit Jerusalem on what was probably intended to be a visit of conciliation. And it may be suggested that then also Paul was disposed to defer to the Apostles, or at least had no desire to bring forward his personal claims in opposition to their recognized pre-eminence. It might be, consequently, that he kept out of sight as far as possible the occasions in which he had come into collision with them, and dwelt in preference upon the points in which he and they were able to agree. He might even be desirous of drawing a veil over his own share in the strife which he had provoked. And this hypothesis might perhaps receive some confirmation from the tone of the later Epistles. It would not make the account in the Acts any more complete or trustworthy, but it would acquit the author of anything like ill faith towards Paul; for he would only have omitted a brief episode which, from the circumstance that we possess the Epistle to the Galatians and the Second to the Corinthians, appears to us of primary importance, but which it would be possible that Paul was desirous to forget, and, as far as he could, to cancel.

We may believe that in the earlier part of the work, as well as in the later, the writer had access to written memorials of

the proceedings of the society and of the journeys of Paul, upon which he has founded his narrative. That he was able to avail himself of one journal by a companion of Paul appears incontestable; and it is probable that other documents of a similar character were preserved in the churches with which he was connected. It would be a matter of course that the society of Nazarenes or Christians in Jerusalem and elsewhere—wherever indeed it was established—should have preserved some records of the more important proceedings: probably of the names of members admitted, of receipts and expenditure, and of any special resolutions adopted by the body; possibly of the holding of all meetings and of the business thus conducted; and that they should have received and preserved reports from the agents whom they employed. These records would be similar to those which a Congregational church might now keep, or more nearly to those kept by a Wesleyan church, since it is possible they would be subject to inspection by delegates from Jerusalem. They would, however, be less elaborate, as the practice of writing was less familiar and the materials less abundant. We are apt to forget that even in the most spiritual and enthusiastic community there must be, after a time, and, probably, will have been from the very first, some degree of organization and method, and that as soon as this is the case there will be some records. It would have been useless to come to any decision affecting the future conduct of members, or the future regulation of affairs, unless there were an authorized depositary of the decision; and that, wherever practicable, would be a writing. And so with regard to the funds of the society. It cannot, for instance, be supposed that when complaints had arisen in the church of Jerusalem of unfairness in the distribution of the common funds, and deacons had been appointed for the purpose of removing this ground of dissatisfaction, that they would not be required to furnish accounts of the moneys they had received and the mode of distribution, which might be submitted to the Apostles and the church at stated periods. And if Matthew

had been a tax-collector, we may be certain that these accounts would be carefully prepared and scrutinized. The presentation of these accounts would imply formal proceedings, minutes of which would be kept; for it would often be requisite to refer to what had occurred at previous meetings as a guide for future conduct. And beside this, it is probable that if any church sent out missionaries for the purpose of preaching the new faith, as we are told was done by the church of Antioch, it would expect on their return not merely a verbal report of their labours and successes, but a written description of the churches they had founded and the number of members admitted, with a list of the officers appointed; and there would also be a record of their original appointment. The records of the church of Jerusalem might indeed have perished during the siege; but some even of these might have been preserved by the fugitives; and those of the churches outside of Judæa would probably subsist till the time when the Acts was written.

If, however, this were the case, there would be a reliable basis for the story and a framework of events in which the writer might introduce the personal incidents he wished to relate. It is possible that the reports of the missionary journeys might relate something of the adventures of the missionaries; but with this exception the records would be brief and formal, containing little more than a few names and dates. At such a time a meeting was held, at which Barnabas and Saul were appointed by the laying on of hands to preach the Gospel in Cyprus and elsewhere. At such another time a meeting was held to welcome Barnabas and Saul on their return, when they reported that they had founded various churches, and had appointed officers for their government; followed by a list of the churches, and of the officers for each church. And, probably, there would be a mention of the names of the presiding brother, and of the officers of the church present on the occasion. Such we may suppose to have been in substance the nature of the minutes. It is probable that the knowledge of writing was so far diffused that



there would seldom be a church, never one of any importance, in which some or one of its members did not possess the art. It would be more natural, therefore, that any one who proposed to write a history of the early Church, or a vindication of the Apostle Paul, should have endeavoured to procure access to these records in order to base his work upon them, than that he should have invented the groundwork as well as the details of the history.

These considerations, while they show the existence of trustworthy sources of information, of which the writer might and probably did avail himself, show at the same time that there was a selection of these materials which must have been the result of a conscious purpose. Assuming, as orthodox writers must assume, that God had chosen Peter, "that the Gentiles by his mouth should receive the word of the Gospel and believe," we cannot suppose that his activities in this field ceased when Paul went to Antioch. Nor can we suppose that if Philip had preached the word in all the cities from Azotus to Cæsarea before, apparently, Paul was converted, he would have subsequently remained idly for twenty years at the latter place, merely because Paul was preaching in Asia Minor and Macedonia. And so with Barnabas and Silas. We must imagine that they preached to Gentiles after their separation from Paul; while, not to mention others of the Apostles, the uniform tradition of the Church with regard to John forbids us to believe that his share in the early history of the Church was as inconspicuous as the narrative would imply. The silence of the writer upon all of these topics could not consequently be the result of lack of materials or of ignorance; and as little can we suppose it to result from accident; for the various parts of the story have in general too obvious a bearing upon each other to allow of such a suggestion. The selection both of incidents and of characters must have been dictated by some motive; and the discovery of that motive, if it can be made, will furnish the best clue to the elucidation of the narrative.



It is obvious upon the surface that the greater part of the work is devoted to a description of the fortunes of the Apostle Paul. From the time of his being consecrated to his first missionary journey he is the prominent figure, and the whole interest of the story centres in him. And this suggests the probability that even the earlier portions may be in some respects connected with him, or that they have at least some relation to the questions with which he was concerned; a probability which almost amounts to a certainty when we find that every individual who is introduced as acting on behalf of the Church is also found to be brought into contact with Paul. Peter and John and James, Stephen, Philip, Barnabas and Silas, all agree in this point, that, either by the Acts itself or by the letters of Paul, they are shown to have been connected with him: and, so far as we are aware, none others of the Apostles or Evangelists were so connected. Not only is no one introduced from among the leaders of the body, excepting those whom Paul knew, but Paul does not appear to have known any others; and this inclusion of the whole of a particular class, and the exclusion of every one else, cannot have been fortuitous.

If, however, a purpose can thus be traced in the selection of the persons introduced, we are naturally led to expect that a similar purpose will have dictated the selection of the incidents; and it has been often pointed out that this is the case with regard to the greater number, and in particular to those connected with Peter. "Peter first opens the door to the Gentiles, led by a special divine revelation, and Paul only carries out upon a wider scale and in a different sphere the work that Peter had commenced. The penal infliction of death upon Ananias and Sapphira is paralleled by the infliction of blindness upon Elymas; the raising of Dorcas by that of Eutychus; the cure of the impotent man at the porch called Beautiful by that of the impotent man at Lystra. If the prison doors are opened to Peter by an angel, they are opened to Paul by an earthquake. If Peter and John confer the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands in

Samaria, Paul does the same at Ephesus; if the shadow of Peter heals the sick, handkerchiefs from the body of Paul have the same power. If Peter cures Æneas, Paul cures the father of Publius at Malta." But this, while it explains the introduction of some of the incidents, fails to account for that of others, or for the manner in which the selected incidents are related. For an explanation of these points we have to seek elsewhere, and it appears to be furnished, with regard to all, or nearly all, by a consideration of the nature of the conflicts in which Paul was engaged, and of the charges made against him.

We know from his own writings, and from incidental notices within and without the canon, that the claims of Paul to be recognized as an Apostle were denied, and that his teaching was assailed. And we learn from the Clementines that an especial contrast was drawn in these respects between him and Peter; one of the points of which contrast was the difference between the mode in which the two asserted themselves to have learned "the mind of Christ." Peter had been a companion of Jesus, and had been taught by him personally, while Paul claimed to have had this revealed to him in visions; and Peter is represented as disparaging this source of knowledge as illusory, since it furnished no test by which the true could be distinguished from the false, and citing instances in which false visions had been sent or permitted in order to deceive the recipient. And we can have no doubt that those within the Church, whoever they might be, who opposed Paul, would scoff at his pretensions to have been taken up into the third heaven, and there to have heard the voices of its inhabitants; nor that there was a violent dispute between himself and Peter; nor that the name of Peter at least was employed against him. But then this enables us to understand the form of one special event related of Peter—the vision in the house of Simon the tanner,<sup>1</sup> in which indeed he was

<sup>1</sup> It is very possible that the trade of Peter's host, considering the low estimation in which tanners were held by the Jews, may have had a reference to conduct attributed to Paul,—to his disregard of Jewish prejudices in his lodgings.

not taken up into heaven, but the heavens were opened to him ; and the heavenly voice which he heard ; and especially his implicit obedience to the vision and the voice seen and heard only by himself. For if on so memorable an occasion, no less than the first breach in the exclusiveness of the Church by the admission of Gentiles, while still such, to its full privileges, Peter had no other warrant than these, which nevertheless determined his own conduct, and were accepted by the church at Jerusalem as its full justification, with what consistency could it have been objected to Paul that his peculiar mission and peculiar doctrines rested entirely upon a like basis ?

And it will be seen that the story is made to serve yet another purpose. One of the chief accusations against Paul was his permitting to eat things sacrificed to idols ; thus not only violating the prescriptions of the Law, but disregarding the restrictions imposed by the Apostles and elders at Jerusalem. And his final rule upon that point was, that such meats might be eaten if bought in the shambles, or if set before a believer at a feast to which he was invited by an unbeliever, if his attention was not directly called to the fact. But this permission would shock the Jewish brethren, and almost equally the more scrupulous among the Gentiles ; who would feel that they were guilty of sacrilege if they partook of meats which had been solemnly dedicated in sacrifice to the gods whose worship they had renounced ; and who would refuse to allow that wilful ignorance, or it might be only the pretence of ignorance, could form a sufficient excuse. This question appears in practice to have been the most important of all, and to have excited the greatest bitterness of feeling.<sup>1</sup> And there can be little doubt that the adherents of Paul continued to avail themselves of his permission, and thus exposed themselves to the reproaches of such as observed the apostolical decree. And yet, at this critical moment in the development of the Church, in the house of Cornelius, Peter—who quarrelled

<sup>1</sup> Rev. ii. 14, 21. Comp. Justin, Dial. xxxv. ; Clem. Hom. viii. 20 ; Recog. viii. 19.

with Paul at Antioch upon this very ground—is represented as eating with men uncircumcised of meats which had been sold in the markets of a heathen city, which therefore certainly were not free from blood, and which, for aught he could tell, might have been previously offered in sacrifice to idols; without inquiry or scruple; all necessity for either having been removed by the heavenly vision; and his conduct is condoned by the Church. He was bid to a feast, prepared by one who did not believe, and he ate of whatever was set before him, asking no question for conscience sake.<sup>1</sup> How then could Paul's detractors, whether at Ephesus or elsewhere, condemn him for allowing to Gentile converts the same liberty that had been exercised by Peter himself, and sanctioned by the Apostles and elders at Jerusalem? Not only, therefore, is Peter made to support the grounds upon which Paul rested his pretensions, but also the very practices in respect of which he was most vehemently attacked.

It appears indeed that this was a chief motive for the insertion (or invention) of the incident. It is true that the ultimate conclusion of the Church is described to have been, that God had to the Gentiles also granted repentance unto life, thus fixing attention upon the reception of Cornelius rather than upon the conduct of Peter. We see, however, that the charge against Peter was, that he had gone in to men uncircumcised, had eaten with them; and one main objection to such an act on the part of a Jew was, that the meat provided would not have been properly slaughtered, and might possibly, probably even, have been offered in sacrifice. The very question that was involved in the dispute at Antioch was therefore involved here; and the form of the vision has an obvious bearing upon that question. No doubt it may be understood to represent symbolically that the Gentiles with whom Peter was then about to consort, and whom he was to admit into the society, were not to be regarded as common or unclean, but it has a more direct relation to the food of which

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 27.

he was about to partake ; for the greater part of the food offered to him in the sheet let down from heaven was of a kind forbidden by the Law.<sup>1</sup>

There is also an analogous motive to be traced in the account given of Stephen. It is true that the introduction of the story of his martyrdom may appear to be sufficiently accounted for by the circumstance that Paul is represented as consenting to his death, and taking charge of the clothes of those who stoned him. But there are other and more important, if less obvious, points of connection. Stephen is made to appear as a sort of precursor of Paul ; he is denounced by the same parties ;<sup>2</sup> accused of an analogous offence, not indeed of having polluted the temple, but of seeking to destroy it ; and he suffered the fate from which Paul was only rescued by the interference of the Roman garrison. And if the first martyr, to whose name a special veneration was necessarily attached, had suffered upon these charges, though falsely, did not that warrant a sympathy with Paul, against whom similar charges were made, and authorize a belief that in his case also they were unfounded ?

The introduction of James also is accounted for not only by the circumstance that, as we learn from Paul, he joined in sanctioning his mission to the Gentiles, and gave the first impulse to the proceedings which resulted in the breach with Peter at Antioch, but also by the part he took in the reception of Paul, both in his first and last visits to Jerusalem. But at first sight there does not appear any adequate motive for the introduction of John and Philip, and especially for the prominent part assigned to the latter : for though one sanctioned Paul's mission to the Gentiles, and the other is described as offering hospitality to him at Cæsarea, this appears scarcely sufficient. But their introduction becomes intelligible if we remember that tradition,

<sup>1</sup> It is an explicit justification of the opinion of Paul, "I know . . . that there is nothing unclean in itself," Rom. xiv. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Among the accusers of Stephen are men "of Cilicia and Asia," Acts vi. 9. And it was the "Jews that were of Asia" that denounced Paul, Acts xxi. 27.



doubtless well founded in this respect, represents both of them as established, the one at Ephesus, where Paul had laboured so long, and whence he had been compelled to fly for his life, and the other at Hierapolis, in the immediate vicinity; so that it would be probable that they had been his immediate opponents, or had been employed after his departure to bring the churches in that district to the unity of the faith, or at the least that their names and authority were invoked by those who repudiated his teaching. If such were the case, then, that Philip should be represented as preaching Christ to the schismatic Samaritans, without any previous apostolical sanction, this would be an implicit justification of the conduct of Paul in continuing to preach to the Gentiles after that sanction had been withdrawn; and the circumstance that the assistance of Peter and John was required, and was given, in order to confer the Holy Spirit, which Philip could not do because he was not an Apostle, not only showed their approval of the unauthorized preaching, but, taken in connection with what is told of Paul at Ephesus,<sup>1</sup> exhibited the superiority of the latter over Philip, and his equality with two of the chief Apostles in this eminently apostolical function. And in the same way the baptism of the Ethiopian courtier may have been introduced in connection with that of the jailer at Philippi. The account of the proceedings of Philip, therefore, which at first appears as an episode, entirely unconnected with the main object of the work, falls into its place, and is seen to contribute to its development. And the same is the case, though less markedly, with regard to John; though here we should perhaps have to inquire whether the subordinate position assigned to him on the various occasions in which he is introduced, and the small share he takes in the early action of the Church, might not be a tacit protest against the supremacy which he, or his followers for him, claimed at Ephesus.<sup>2</sup>

It will of course be said that all this is fanciful, that the work

<sup>1</sup> Acts xix. 5, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Or was it that John was living when the work was written?



is obviously natural and spontaneous, that the author has no other object than to describe the salient incidents in the history of the early Church, and that he has simply selected those which commended themselves to his judgment for the purpose; and it must be admitted that he does possess in an eminent degree that higher art which knows how to assume the aspect of nature, keeping itself out of sight. But, if there were no such motive as we have suggested, how does it happen that the work contains no reference, even by implication, to the dispute with Peter or with any parties in the Church itself, while Peter is made by his conduct to vindicate the pretensions and the practices of Paul in those very particulars in which they were most vehemently assailed? And how does it happen that all the incidents worthy of description should be associated exclusively with those individuals in the Church who are afterwards brought into contact with Paul, and that he should be brought into contact with none but these? This at least is unquestionable. Those, therefore, who deny the existence of any conscious purpose in the writer, must assume either that no acts worthy of remembrance were performed by any of the other Apostles, or that he was ignorant of them, both of which assumptions are inadmissible. And even this would not be enough. It would be necessary further to assume that Peter, who was at first so "mighty in word and power," and "so favoured of God," did nothing whatever after his marvellous rescue from prison but claim for himself the merit of having first preached the Gospel to the Gentiles, and on that account advise that they should be free from the yoke of the Law. And analogous assumptions would have to be made in the case of John, Philip, Barnabas, and Silas. The whole elaborate machinery for the propagation of Christianity—the appointment of the Apostles and their endowment with the Holy Ghost—the organization of the church at Jerusalem—the preaching of the dispersed disciples—the founding of the church at Antioch—would upon this hypothesis have been in truth, what they are made to appear to have been in the Acts, only preparations for the advent

of Paul, with whose entrance on the scene they become effete and insignificant.

This, however, is a conclusion which is as untenable from the orthodox point of view as it is from the historical. For from the former it cannot be admitted that the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was an useless endowment, or that Jesus was mistaken when he predicted that the Apostles should be witnesses to him to the uttermost parts of the earth; and from the latter, such a conclusion is inconsistent with the actual facts of the diffusion of the faith. It may be true that we have no absolutely certain data connecting any one of the Apostles with the first preaching of the Gospel in any particular place; but the uniform tradition of the Church, supported by the record of their appointment and of the promises and warnings addressed to them, entitle us to believe that they were the chief instruments in the work. Nor indeed is it a conclusion which any orthodox writers, so far as we are aware, explicitly maintain: it is, indeed, often implicitly contained in their reasonings, but it is one which they would scarcely care to avow, though they of course assume that no action, whatever might be the inspiration of the agent, unless it is recorded in the Scriptures, could have any importance whatever as bearing either upon faith or conduct. Nevertheless, they would admit that in fact very many things have been omitted of which the writer cannot be supposed to be ignorant, not only with regard to the Apostles in general, but also with regard to Paul and Peter, the two chief figures upon his canvas. And unless they suppose the writer to have been the unconscious instrument of the Holy Spirit, which would only throw back the inquiry to a prior stage, they must, it would seem, admit also that there was some principle by which he was guided in his selection, something beyond the desire to tell the exact and simple truth. And, if so, one of his actuating motives must have been to raise and to vindicate the character of Paul. This purpose is apparent on the surface of the greater part of the narrative, and we may therefore naturally suppose it to have influenced other portions also.

Indeed, the more closely the work is examined, the more closely does it appear to be essentially a Pauliad. True, it is written in the interests of peace, and it has obviously an ulterior bearing upon controversies still existing in the Church; but it is intended primarily and above all to justify the character and conduct of Paul. And such a work was needed. There can be no doubt that, from the time of the dispute at Antioch until at least the beginning of the third century, there were individuals in the Church, perhaps even a party, who not only repudiated his claim to the title of Apostle, but decried his teaching and vilified his character. And we may be certain that there were others who made use of his name and writings to dispute the authority of the other Apostles, and to represent them as Judaical and exclusive, to disparage the Law, and to claim an exaggerated freedom in all matters which they regarded as indifferent. And some would carry out his reasonings to consequences which he repudiated, and would argue that the Law, which was so weak and insufficient, could not have proceeded from a wise, good, and all-powerful Being, such as the Supreme God, but must have been the work of some inferior and partially evil principle.<sup>1</sup> Paul, therefore, needed to be cleared from the imputations to which he was subject by reason of the use made of his doctrines by those who claimed to be his followers, as well as from the attacks of his enemies; and the Acts is obviously well fitted to accomplish both of these objects. Not only, as we have seen, does it vindicate his apostolical dignity, indirectly indeed but effectually, and bring into strong prominence his long and varied labours for the cause of Christ and the persecutions he endured in consequence, but it represents him, in spite of his speculative views, as throughout his whole career "walking orderly and keeping the law." And it finds a precedent for the very practices which were most strongly objected to when introduced or sanctioned by him, in the conduct of Peter and Philip, acting in both cases under the immediate influence of the Divine Spirit.

<sup>1</sup> This was the case with Marcion, and doubtless with many others.

And while doing this, it carefully excludes every episode in the history of the Church in which the conduct of Paul provoked dissension in the body, or involved him in conflict with any of its leaders. No fair reasoner can, consequently, deny the existence of such a purpose as we have indicated, though he may differ from us as to the extent to which it has operated.

But in vindicating the character of Paul, the writer does not forget to be just to those whom Paul assails. His story, indeed, is so framed in the case of Peter, the only leader of the Church who is attacked by name, as to exhibit him in the very opposite light to that in which he is depicted by Paul. In the letter to the Galatians, Peter is held up to the contempt of the Church as weak and insincere; while in the Acts he is represented as the fearless asserter of the truth of the resurrection, suffering stripes and imprisonment and threatened with death for the sake of the Gospel, the instrument of the conversion of thousands, a worker of miracles, who can heal the lame and raise the dead; rescued from the death that threatened him by the intervention of an angel; and, especially, as the agent by whom Gentiles are admitted into the Church by the mere rite of baptism, and the advocate of the measure of compromise which the Church adopted. And in this we may probably see an intended exculpation from the charges made by Paul, charges made in a moment of anger, and therefore, probably, unfounded or exaggerated, but rendered permanent by the form in which they were presented. It is true that to the mass of Protestant believers who possess the New Testament, the effect of the last of these representations has been to aggravate the charge made against Peter by showing that in the conduct imputed to him he was belying his previous convictions and practices, although they had been founded upon a heavenly vision and had been sanctioned by the Church, and that he was consequently without excuse. This, however, is a result which the author could not have anticipated. He certainly did not imagine that a time would ever come when his writings and those of Paul would be bound up together in a

handy form and circulated by millions throughout the world as being both of them divinely inspired and infallibly true. His purpose was, while justifying Paul, to clear the character of Peter, so far as it was affected by the imputations Paul had cast upon him, by exhibiting him as displaying qualities inconsistent with the conduct imputed to him, and which, therefore, would warrant the belief that Paul was mistaken.

The recognition of such a purpose as we have indicated in the construction of the work necessarily detracts from its value as an authority. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to say to what extent the circumstances described are due to the invention of the writer; or, when there is a basis of fact, to what extent the facts have been distorted or coloured in order to make them subserve his purpose. May we not even suspect that the present form of the story of the death of Ananias and Sapphira has some relation to the claim made by Paul to the power to "deliver an erring brother to Satan for the destruction of the flesh," and that the account of the impression produced upon the Jews by the exercise of the gift of tongues on the day of Pentecost, when all the brethren are represented as speaking together, and some of the spectators "mocking said, These men are full of new wine,"<sup>1</sup> is a covert allusion to the disorders described by Paul as connected with the exercise of the same gift in the church at Corinth?<sup>2</sup> Such disorders in a church which he had formed had, we may be sure, been charged upon Paul, but they are here shown to be associated with the gift from the beginning, even in the parent society. And other similar coincidences, and therefore possible references, may be found. Such a work cannot be accepted as a guide without much hesitation and many qualifications.

The question of authorship is one upon which it is difficult to

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 23, ff. : "If therefore . . . all speak with tongues, and the unlearned or unbelievers come in, will they not say you are mad?"



form an opinion. The first impression is, of course, that it was written by a companion of Paul, since the use of the first person, and the minuteness and seeming accuracy of the details in those portions of the work in which the writer assumes to speak in his own person, point directly to such a conclusion. A more careful investigation, however, and especially a comparison of the picture drawn of Paul with that which Paul draws of himself, seems to show that this first impression is unfounded. There is a noticeable distinction between the style of those passages in which the "we" is used and the rest of the work, which appears to indicate difference of authorship. This may indeed be explained on the hypothesis that the writer was copying verbatim from some old journal which he had written in colloquial phrase while the events were passing or when their memory was still vivid. It must be remembered, however, that a writer using his own memoranda for the purpose of refreshing his memory would have no scruple in working them up to the same level of style as the rest of the work; while a copyist might feel himself bound to adhere literally to them when he was able, and might even choose to do so in order to give an appearance of reality to the character he was assuming. And it seems at first sight impossible that a person who had really been a loved and trusted friend of Paul should have given such a description of his position and conduct, should have ignored his claims, and have persistently kept out of sight what we are accustomed to regard as his special doctrines;<sup>1</sup> and yet, on the other hand, the writer appears to feel a strong personal attachment to Paul, for whose sake the work is written, and to whom, as we have seen, nearly every incident has a direct or tacit reference. It is true that there is no formal vindication of any of his pretensions, and the most important

<sup>1</sup> It is true that the phrase, "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts xiii. 38, 39), when read in the light of Paul's Epistles, may pass for a summary of his doctrine. But without the commentary which these Epistles supply, no one would have dreamed of finding in it any such doctrines as Paul there elaborates.



even appear to be excluded. Probably at the time their assertion would have excited an opposition which it would have been imprudent to provoke; but, as we have seen, they are all vindicated implicitly. This is done partly by showing the possession of powers which belonged to the office he claimed, and partly by attributing to men of undoubted position and authority in the Church conduct which by implication admitted their validity. And it must be allowed that if the author keeps certain incidents out of sight, he misses no opportunity of doing justice to Paul's zeal, eloquence, and courage. It may even be a question whether the character of Paul is not depicted in more attractive colours in the Acts than it is by himself in his own letters; and if such a question can be now raised by us who know the circumstances only from Paul's own statements, much more might it be so at the time when the memory of the contests he had provoked was recent, and he was regarded by the majority as a public disturber; and when the very churches he had assisted to found had in a great measure fallen away from him.

There can be no doubt that in many of these churches, especially in Asia Minor, there was still a party that adhered to Paul; but it appears to have culminated in such men as Marcion and his followers, who claimed the same exclusive authority for him that the author of Revelations, Justin, and Hermas, claim for the Twelve, and it always must have been the minority. But its existence as a distinct party, repudiating the authority of the Twelve when it conflicted with that of Paul, would tend to perpetuate and even to augment the hostility to Paul himself; and it would concentrate attention, not upon his wide labours for the diffusion of the faith, but upon just that exceptional period in his career when he was brought into opposition to the leading Apostles. We can therefore conceive that Luke in his later years, when Paul and Peter had both disappeared from the scene, and when their followers in Rome at least had been united by the common persecution which they had suffered, might have devoted himself to the work of promoting a similar

reconciliation throughout the Church by calling to remembrance the eminent services which Paul had rendered, while keeping out of sight claims which he believed, not indeed to have been unfounded, but to have been unwisely urged, and disputes which, whatever might be their origin, had been exasperated by his unconciliating temper and unbounded self-assertion. And it might be that Paul himself, when a prolonged imprisonment had given time for reflection, was willing that a veil should be thrown over incidents that he could not but regret. It can scarcely be doubted that if he could have recalled his letter to the Galatians he would have been glad to have done so; for he could not wish to stigmatize Peter to all time as a hypocrite condemned by his own act, or to exhibit himself as cursing those who only taught what the Church sanctioned; and he may have been conscious that his impetuosity had often tempted him to an unwise use of his rare powers of invective and sarcasm. At the time when the Acts was written, there was probably no collection of his writings, and if there had been its contents would have been known to very few. The task, therefore, would be comparatively easy, for scarcely any of those who might see the history would be aware of the existence of the letters that showed its inaccuracy; while the few who knew of both would find no difficulty in satisfying themselves that they mutually confirmed each other. And if Luke had been a young man when he joined Paul at Troas, probably in A.D. 54, he might have written the work from thirty to forty years later, when he had reached the age of sixty or a little more. In that case the period fixed for the termination of the work might be due, not to the deficiency of materials, but to the circumstance that this closed the portion of the life of the Apostle which had brought him into collision with the pillars of the Church.

These suggestions appear to mitigate the difficulty that is necessarily created by the hypothesis that a work which departs so widely from the account that Paul has given of himself, was written by one of his companions and friends, but they do not

altogether remove it. For in his desire to clear the character of Paul from the accusations made against him, the writer represents him as utterly regardless of the truth in his various statements. And there are many indications which suggest rather the hand of a later compiler who is dealing with original documents, which he sometimes freely manipulates and sometimes closely copies, than that of an eye-witness who supplements his own personal narrative by information which he has collected from others. This question, however, though interesting, scarcely appears to affect the value of the work as an authority. Upon either hypothesis, it is a writing which the historian can only use with great caution and reserve. It is obviously legendary in part, and in that part, as well as in the portion that has claims to be historical, it is written not for the purpose of depicting events as they were reported among the brethren, or as they were known to have occurred, but of drawing a picture of the early history and subsequent development of the Church, and of the conduct of such of its leading members as were brought into contact with Paul, that might harmonize with the purpose of the writer. But it is probable that there is a basis of fact for the greater part, and it does not seem to be hopeless to attempt to form a substantially accurate conception of the condition, beliefs, and development of the Church, in spite of the uncertainty that must necessarily rest upon details. We have, indeed, no means of correction or verification excepting such as are furnished by the letters of Paul, and from these we see how little the author was solicitous of completeness or accuracy. But imperfect and unreliable as are the materials, they are all that we possess, and we must perforce employ them in our attempt.

In the present as in our former work, our object is purely historical: that of describing events as, upon the best consideration we can give to the subject, they appear to us to have occurred. And here, as there, we deal with our materials solely from the historical point of view. We accept no statement without an

attempt to estimate its value, and give to no authority any greater weight than seems to be due to the knowledge and trustworthiness of the author. And these we endeavour to test in the ordinary way: by the probability of the events; by their conformity to what we know from other sources; and by the apparent spirit in which the work is composed. So far, however, as the last is concerned, the circumstance that our present accounts are supposed to have been written by men whom the Church has elevated into saints, may possibly detract from instead of adding to their value. History knows nothing of saints as an authority for facts. It knows them indeed, but as individuals so possessed by an idea as to be incapable of estimating its relative value as compared with other ideas, or of allowing for the natural hesitation of other minds to receive it; and who, in their determination to make their own views triumph, are too often ready to employ without scruple whatever means appear likely to produce the desired result. It knows that to such men, truth, in the ordinary sense of the conformity of words to facts, is altogether immaterial, if put in competition with the interests of *the Truth*, or what they assume to be such. If it be allowable to make a false statement to save a life, it must surely be equally allowable to frame a narrative in such a manner as, e.g., to conceal the existence of dissensions among inspired men, and thus remove an argument of which the enemies of the faith might avail themselves. In any work, indeed, written by a believer in the interests of his belief, there is always ground for suspecting an unconscious, or it may be a conscious, bias, which carries him away from the truth as it would appear to an impartial spectator, and the bias will be powerful in proportion as his belief is intense.

And in reference to the Acts of the Apostles, there is an additional ground of distrust arising out of the character of the writer's opinions, and the nature of the events he relates. Assuming him to have received the report of eye-witnesses, that would not make his story any the more credible when he pro-

fesses to relate such events as the raising of a dead person to life, or the instantaneous cure of a man lame from his mother's womb, by virtue of the efficacy of the name of Jesus. We need not discuss the question whether any amount of evidence would be sufficient to prove such facts, for certainly no one would believe them upon the uncorroborated statement of a single writer (not an eye-witness); unless, indeed, they were related of persons whom upon independent grounds he believed to be divine or divinely gifted. And the circumstance that the writer believes in demoniacal possession, i.e. in the actual indwelling of a devil (or of many devils) in the body of a living human being, from which it could be driven by exorcism, and relating facts which imply the literal truth of such possession, would at once from the historical standpoint, not destroy indeed, but very greatly diminish, the authority to which he was entitled. For we should feel that we could not expect from him any sifting of evidence.

But it may be said that the possession of these supernatural powers was obviously believed in by Paul, and therefore presumably by the other Apostles, who must have known whether they were real; and that they proved the sincerity of their convictions by perilling their lives for the cause. This argument, however, assumes something which is obviously erroneous; viz. that a man cannot be mistaken as to his own powers, or be firmly persuaded of the truth of something that has not happened, even when he believes he has ocular demonstration of the fact. And it leaves out of sight two things: one, the effect of excited feelings in confusing the perception and warping the judgment; and the other, that whatever may be said with regard to the question of martyrdom, it seems clear that the position of Peter, and presumably of the other Apostles, as heads of the church of Jerusalem, or of the separate churches founded elsewhere, was superior to what it had been in their previous occupation. Peter appears in the Acts, and appears in legend also, to have been at all times in easy circumstances. M. Renan, indeed, suggests that at Antioch he might have resumed his previous occupation



of a fisherman;<sup>1</sup> but this is in the highest degree improbable. A wealthy church, as that of Antioch would be considered, if only from the number of its members, would have thought itself disgraced if it had permitted the chief of the Apostles to neglect the discharge of his spiritual functions in order to toil for his daily living. And the boast that Paul makes of his own conduct in supporting himself in Corinth by the labour of his hands, would have no meaning if that were the practice of Peter and the Twelve. Compare, too, the position of Peter when he is first introduced to us—a fisherman, “toiling all night,” mending his nets on the shore by day—with that which he afterwards occupies at Jerusalem—dispensed from all necessity of labour, and not even condescending to leave the word of God to serve tables. It is not suggested that this would make him dishonest or untruthful, but it certainly would seem that for the sake of this position itself he might encounter persecution, as it is termed; that is, assert the principles of the society and strive to maintain its efficiency and unity, to widen the sphere of its operations and to increase the number of its members, in spite of the repressive action of the government. He might even confront danger and death in the furtherance of these objects without our being able from that to argue any superiority in the nature of his testimony over that of the numbers who, upon the faith of his report, or of the report of those whom he persuaded, undertook similar labours, and encountered and endured similar dangers and sufferings. Nor even over the testimony of the thousands who in other causes have for analogous purposes incurred the like perils.

Even with Paul something of the same reasoning will apply. When he visits Jerusalem for the last time it is as a delegate, having a large number of attendants, travelling at the expense of the churches; and travelling in such apparent comfort as to induce a recent writer to imagine that he must have been a person of large independent means; and during his imprisonment both at Cæsarea and at Rome we find him enjoying privileges

<sup>1</sup> Saint Paul, p. 283.



that could only have been procured by money, and that must have been dearly paid for. No doubt, if he has not exaggerated the account of his sufferings, he had to endure a great deal; but the suffering was not without compensation even from a purely human point of view; and its endurance proves not the truth of the facts implied in his teaching, for he knew none of them directly, but the sincerity of his belief in the reality of his own internal impressions; and, perhaps (though this is doubtful), his reliance upon the veracity of those from whom he had received information as to the life and resurrection of Jesus. And his description implies that his sufferings were exceptional.

We should have also to ask ourselves what Paul could know of Jesus to justify us upon historical grounds, or indeed upon any ground, in accepting his statement that by him God made the worlds, or that God had made Christ to be sin for us; or any of the other matters which he professes to declare with regard to the essential nature of Christ or the purposes of God. Whenever we are able to test his conceptions or his reasonings, we find them upon the same level as those of his contemporaries in his own nation. Thus he believed that death entered the world by the sin of Adam, and that angels are likely to be seduced by a sight of the unveiled beauty of women,<sup>1</sup> and that the rock smitten by Moses followed the Israelites through their wanderings and was Christ, and that the end of the world was so near at hand that it was not worth while for a converted slave to make himself free even if he had the opportunity. And so with regard to his reasonings, especially those founded upon his quotations from the Jewish Scriptures. The question, therefore, is, not what guarantee can we have that his views with regard to the person of Jesus and the will of God are true, but rather, is there not a strong antecedent probability that they are false? If he had uttered views in advance of his contemporaries, which

<sup>1</sup> This at least is the only intelligible explanation of the passage, 1 Cor. xi. 10, that has yet been suggested. And its rejection appears to be only due to the difficulty modern commentators feel in attributing such an idea to an inspired writer.

the progress of knowledge had shown to be well founded in those particulars in which they were capable of verification, there would be a ground for supposing that a fuller knowledge might show him to be right in matters which are beyond the reach of our present faculties. But when the contrary is the case ; when advancing knowledge has proved him to be mistaken in those matters in which his assertions could be tested, it would seem that there can be only one conclusion with regard to those other statements which we are unable to test. And it is not as though, on the one hand, his views in those points upon which it is claimed that he was infallible were separated by any line of demarcation from those in which he is proved to have been mistaken ; or, on the other, as though they were so absolutely original as to entitle any one to hold that they must have been given to him by revelation. They are, on the contrary, transformations of current opinions, and may be found in various stages of development in contemporary writings ; and they form one whole inextricably blended together in his mind.

The question of miracles is less important in connection with the history of the early Church than with that of Jesus, because, as the Apostles, with the exception of the Apostle Paul, are relied upon chiefly as witnesses, the value of their testimony depends upon their natural rather than upon their supernatural endowments. Still it has an obvious bearing upon the credit due to the historian, and upon the authority claimed for Paul. If we assume that there is a personal God who is able, e.g., to deprive the particles of matter composing a human body of just so much of their property of attracting and being attracted by other matter as to allow that body to walk upon the water ; or of causing the particles of matter in a dead body which have already entered into those new combinations which we term decomposition, and portions of which have been exhaled into the atmosphere, to re-enter into those combinations which are the cause and condition of life ; and if we further assume that He

exercises this power arbitrarily, and not according to any law,—there is nothing absolutely incredible in the report that such effects have been produced. And it is admitted that no one can “prove” that there is not such a God. But even then we have surely a right to treat such occurrences as being improbable in proportion to their rarity, and to ask for proof corresponding in force to the antecedent improbability to be overcome. Take, for instance, the miraculous conception, which with very many believers is the essential foundation of their faith. This is represented as absolutely unique,<sup>1</sup> and unique not only through the human family, but throughout the whole vertebrate series. It is therefore, not indeed impossible upon the hypothesis we are considering, but in the very highest degree improbable, and demanding a corresponding cogency of proof. What then is the evidence upon the orthodox view? A dream of Joseph and an announcement by the archangel Gabriel to Mary, related by anonymous writers fifty and more years after the event. And it must be remembered that, though the fact is unique, the pretence is not. There is probably no physician who has reached the age of sixty without having heard more than once an essentially similar story. As we have before stated, we believe that the Christian legend has been unjust to Mary, in describing her first child as having been born before marriage, or under circumstances which in any way impeached her chastity. But if we were to believe the fact to have been such, we should have to ask ourselves whether it was not incomparably more probable that a woman should make a false assertion to hide her shame, and that her husband should concur in it to veil his dishonour, than that a personal God should have interfered by miracle to initiate the changes which resulted in the development of the fetus and birth of the child? And then, whether the nature of the evidence is such as to reverse these probabilities, and to induce us to accept the latter alternative as an absolute verity? And the same argument would apply

<sup>1</sup> “Whom alone the Mother and the Maid we own.”—Hymns Ancient and Modern.

in the case of every other miracle related in the Bible. If the question is removed out of the region of evidence into that of sentiment, and treated upon the basis of its satisfying the spiritual needs or desires of believers, there is no more to be said, excepting that these can be satisfied as effectually by the imagination as by the fact.

And there is one singular consequence that seems to follow from the ordinary Protestant view with regard to miracles, that circumcision, if not a necessary condition to their performance, is a necessary condition to their being so performed as to make belief a duty. And the same is the case with regard to inspiration. We might indeed say that being of the seed of Jacob was such a condition, but for the single exception of the author of the third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, since he apparently was only a proselyte of righteousness.<sup>1</sup> Every miracle in the canon is wrought by a Hebrew, and every work in the canon was, with one possible exception, written by a man circumcised. When the leadership of the Church passed into the hands of Gentiles who did not submit to the rite, the gift of inspiration was withdrawn, and the power of working miracles apparently ceased. Or, if not, they are reduced to the level of ordinary occurrences, and, like them, are to be received or rejected according to the weight of the testimony in their favour.

The rapid diffusion of Christianity, and its ultimate triumph, testify to its intrinsic vitality, and to its adaptation to the cravings of humanity; alike we must believe in its meanness as in its more noble impulses; but apologists are apt to exaggerate the difficulties it had to encounter, and especially the opposition presented by the existing forms of worship. They have uncon-

<sup>1</sup> He remains with Paul to keep the Passover at Philippi, and, though he must have been seen in his company at Jerusalem, there is no fear lest his being brought in should pollute the Temple. Had he not been circumcised, there would be as much ground for the apprehension in his case as in that of Trophimus. If it be said that he was Luke, and therefore not circumcised (Col. iv. 11, 14, though that passage is not conclusive), he would be a solitary exception to the rule as regards inspiration.

sciously assumed an organization analogous to that of the Roman Church, with which they were familiar; and have therefore concluded that nothing but direct supernatural intervention could have caused its success. And if their premises were valid, there would be some justification for their conclusion; for, in that case, without supernatural aid, Christianity would have been crushed as effectually in the Roman Empire as were the Reformed doctrines in Spain. But, in reality, there was nothing of the sort. There was no organized priesthood pervading the whole Empire, subject to a single head, acting together for a common purpose, capable of combining their efforts against any intrusive sect, and wielding the power of the State. There were local deities: Serapis in Alexandria, Athene in Athens, Aphrodite in Cyprus, Artemis in Ephesus, Jupiter in Rome; but all, by reason of their localization, admitting that other deities might exist, and necessarily tolerating their worshippers within certain limits. Not one of the ancient worships with which Christianity came into contact was founded upon the idea of the absolute and exclusive rights of the gods it served; and none taught that men would be punished for ever in hell if they did not recognize and obey them. The prosperity of Ephesus, or Alexandria, or Rome, might be involved in the maintenance of the worship of their tutelary gods,<sup>1</sup> but there was no future world in which their votaries would be blessed and all others tormented. Happiness in another state of being was the reward of goodness, not of belief. And it was as natural that a Jew should worship Jehovah as that a Roman should worship Jupiter; for in each case it was the maintenance of the religion of the people. As, too, the Jews proselyted chiefly among the slaves and the poor, little or no attention would be directed to their early efforts to gain adherents to this new development of their creed. When,

<sup>1</sup> A supporter of the ancient faith, were he now living, tracing the subsequent fortune of these cities, might well say that these gods had terribly avenged themselves for the desertion of their former worshippers. And we, who can refer their downfall to causes with which the anger of the gods had nothing to do, must admit that Christianity has been one, and not the least efficacious, of these causes.



indeed, the number of converts became so large as to affect the offerings to the temples—or, as in the case of Ephesus, the sale of the shrines—popular dissatisfaction might be excited; but this would of course be local, and it would not be sanctioned by the Roman magistrates. Thus we are told that the tumultuous demonstration in Ephesus was checked by the town-clerk, on the ground that those who took part in it were liable to be called to account for their proceedings. And so in the various cases in which Paul and his companions are represented as suffering either from the turbulence of the mob or from the action of the magistrates, they are always safe when they reach another city, until their preaching excites the same hostility against them. Everywhere it was permitted to a stranger to worship his own gods, and to invite others to join him in their worship; and this liberty was only restrained when it involved some derogation to the honour of the local deities, or was believed to be a cloak for immorality or sedition.

These considerations account, not indeed for the spread of Christianity, for that was due to the attractions it possessed for those to whom it was presented, but for the circumstance that no attempts were made to destroy it. There was no religion which claimed to be absolutely true, and therefore universal; none which dealt with opinions; none which asserted authority over the reason and the conscience; none which availed itself of the terrors of another world to coerce its votaries into fear and hatred of everything that savoured of heresy, and to make them feel that in exterminating the heretic they were doing a service to God and to the truth. Persecutions when they arose were at first political rather than religious; prompted by the idea that the new faith was dangerous, not that it was false; and they necessarily lacked comprehensiveness and persistency. When the occasion out of which the persecution sprang was forgotten, and in districts in which it was unknown, the measures directed against the Church naturally languished; and even in the worst times there were places in which the action of the magistrate



was slight. There was no priest at his elbow, partaking of the authority of the vast organization of which he formed a part, ready to denounce to him every one tainted with the obnoxious doctrines, and ready to denounce him if he were lacking in zeal for their extirpation. And, above all, there was no Inquisition, without which heresy has never been quite extirpated even in the most thoroughly Romish states. The Christians formed a dangerous sect; regarded indeed as contemptible for their absurd superstitions, and hateful in so far as they hated all who did not share in their follies; but dangerous only by reason of their numbers and union, not because they perilled the eternal salvation of those who still adhered to the popular faith. The intolerance of which they were the victims was a reaction against their own intolerance, and it was therefore spasmodic. It was indeed opposed to the essential principle of paganism—that of the right of every one to worship the gods of his country or people, and to join with these any other gods, so long as he did not interfere with the corresponding rights of others, and was willing to show respect to the religion of the State.

These, however, were conditions with which it was impossible that the Christians should comply,—since if their beliefs were true, all others were false and soul-destroying. They regarded all gods but Jehovah as demons, evil spirits, and they could not without sacrilege unite in their worship. And occasionally, no doubt, one more zealous than his brethren would provoke an outburst of popular indignation by some open denunciation of the false gods in whom the multitude believed; or, perhaps, by some act of sacrilege, some outrage to an idol or a temple. But at this time at least they kept their opinions to themselves, not making any public profession of their tenets, though ready to proclaim them if necessary, and doing their utmost to gain converts. And though the Jews might resent the conduct of Paul, and magistrates might listen to complaints against “vagabond Jews,” and punish them for tumults which their enemies had excited, but for which their preaching had been the pretext, yet

these measures would be only occasional. Ordinarily no one would trouble himself with the proceedings of enthusiasts who taught some unintelligible doctrine concerning the immediate destruction of the world, and the return from heaven of some new demigod, and who were winning over a few converts from among men of their own class. And some who felt sufficient interest in their proceedings to inquire into the nature of the doctrines they taught, might appreciate their views of the unity of God, and the pure morality and universal brotherhood which they inculcated, and might on that account forgive what they would consider the absurdities with which these were connected. Although, therefore, it was a matter of certainty that Christianity, if it continued to spread, must come into collision with the State, yet it was probable this would not occur until the number of Christians was such as to render the suppression of the sect well nigh impossible.

In following the journeys of the Apostle Paul in works that describe the contemporary condition of the cities in which he preached, such, for instance, as those of M. Renan and of Messrs. Conybeare and Howson, we cannot but be struck by the contrast between their past and present fortunes. Ephesus, Corinth, Philippi, Colosse, Laodicea, Thessalonica, to the churches of which his Epistles were addressed, were then thriving and populous, while now for the most part they are deserted and ruinous. And Rome is sadly shorn of its ancient glories. Whatever Christianity may have effected for the salvation of the individuals by whom it was received, it has not, in those cases in which it was preached to communities already civilized and flourishing, availed to maintain their prosperity. From Jerusalem all round to Illyricum, the whole region appears to have been blighted; and the same is the case from Alexandria to Mauritania. Nor have Italy and Spain wholly escaped the paralyzing influences. Pagan Greece was able to maintain its independence against the barbarism of Asia; and if the Greek settlements in

Asia were subdued, they could nevertheless preserve their civilization and wealth; while Christian Greece succumbed. Rome, too, as long as it was pagan, went on conquering and to conquer; and in spite of the harsh and grasping spirit of its ruling class, the countries it conquered retained or were permitted to re-acquire their former prosperity; while Christian Rome fell before its barbarian assailants, and, notwithstanding their conversion, civilization and prosperity were for a long time effaced over the greater portion of its dominions.

We are perhaps apt to be somewhat unjust in the comparisons we institute between Christianity and other forms of religion. We try the one by its highest utterances, or by what we conceive to be its essential characteristics, and the others by their practical manifestations, or by the fables with which the populace are amused. Too often, indeed, the comparison is merely between the virtues which Christianity inculcates and the vices which other religions are unable to prevent. And this is obviously unfair. Judged by results, taking the ten centuries that succeeded the establishment of Christianity by Constantine, and the ten centuries that preceded it, as the subjects of comparison, it is probable that an impartial inquiry would rather give the palm to the old religions, so far as regards their effects upon morality, learning, and civilization. The details of the lives of many of the Christian Emperors at Constantinople, even the most orthodox, are scarcely more edifying than those of the majority of the twelve Cæsars. But they are less known, and they are for the most part decently veiled, while the others are dragged into the light for the purpose of showing the essentially evil nature of the religion which sanctioned their conduct. And the Christian mobs at Constantinople and Alexandria, though headed by monks or prelates, and contending for various aspects of the truth, were not much superior to the heathen populace of Rome. Estimated by the writings of satirists and chroniclers, the Rome of many of the mediæval Popes was as depraved as the Rome of Tiberius or Nero; and if, as is probable, we ought to receive the charges

against the one with some degree of caution and reserve, so obviously ought we against the other. If, too, we look at the prevailing beliefs during these periods, it is by no means certain that we should have to give the preference to the Christian period. For if the Church taught the unity and sovereignty of God, it represented Him as a capricious and vindictive despot, and practically subordinated His worship to that of the human Jesus, and still more to that of his Mother, and of the saints and martyrs; especially of those whose relics gave sanctity to the altar before which they performed their worship. And this worship involved low conceptions of life and morals, and altogether obscured the idea of duty, excepting that of obedience to the Church.

During this period, also, the triumphs of Christianity in converting the northern nations to such a faith as it had then become, were probably more than compensated by its losses from the Mohammedan conquests. The lands which had been the birthplace of the faith were won to Islamism at the point of the sword, and they speedily embraced, and have since firmly maintained, the new doctrines. Christianity almost everywhere receded before its rival, and though the advancing tide was stayed in the West by the victory of Tours, it continued to rise in the East until it overwhelmed the entire Eastern empire. The countries which had produced the greatest of the Fathers, those who had most influence in shaping the doctrine of the Church and were its most eloquent expounders, Irenæus, Tertullian, Augustine, Chrysostom, Origen, Jerome, to name only the most conspicuous, passed under the sway of the Caliphs and their successors; and the larger portion have remained obstinately alienated from their former belief. Not merely, therefore, did Christianity fail to maintain the civilization of the regions in which it was first preached; it was unable, through the greater part of those regions, to maintain itself either by arms or by reasoning against assailants who, professing to worship the same God, proclaimed Mahomet in opposition to Jesus.

There is, indeed, another side to this, which it is only necessary to indicate, for it is the side uniformly presented by Christian writers. There was, no doubt, very much that was immoral and debasing in the ancient religions which Christianity encountered, and their fundamental conceptions were altogether out of harmony with the wider knowledge which even then existed. The localization of the gods weakened belief in their power in proportion as their votaries became familiar with other countries and other deities. They could not, therefore, continue to furnish a basis for national life, nor command the adhesion of the educated classes, by whom indeed they were almost universally repudiated. And Christianity, as originally preached, had many aspects which contrasted favourably with the worships it superseded. It was universal, and might be accepted by men of every land and race, for it told of the God who had made of one blood all the families of men that dwelt upon the face of the earth. It enforced a pure morality. It prescribed justice to all men as a duty. And it taught that the favour of God and an entrance into His kingdom were to be secured, not by gifts or sacrifices, but by holiness, <sup>piety</sup> righteousness, and love. Had it been able to raise its professors to the level of its principles, the subsequent history of the world might have been very different. But this was impossible. Human nature, save in a few exceptional instances, proved to be too strong or too perverse to be changed by the new faith; and the result was not to elevate humanity, but to lower the standard of religion. The energetic protests and denunciations of the great writers and preachers from the time of Tertullian downwards, show how lamentably the practice of the Church fell below its professions; and show, at the same time, how, in deference to the irresistible popular demand, the original faith had been supplemented or replaced by practices suited to the low moral conceptions and subsisting polytheistic tendencies of the ignorant majority. Not a few of the old pagan deities re-appeared in the guise of saints, whose favour might be secured upon the same terms as that of the gods they had displaced. Virtue



and holiness were still preached. There never has been a time, indeed, in which illustrious voices have not been raised in their behalf; nevertheless, there was no vice for which remission could not be procured upon well-ascertained terms. If God and His Mother and the Saints could not be importuned for success in lawless love, or in schemes of treachery or fraud, or of vengeance, or of unprovoked aggression—and this is very doubtful—their indulgence might be secured by gifts to the Church, and the offender knew beforehand the price he would have to pay for absolution. True belief was, indeed, rigidly enforced; the only unpardonable offences being heresy, or a renunciation of the faith; but so long as the creed was accurate, the conduct was comparatively of little account. And when to this was added the studied depreciation of the human faculties, especially reason, so that there was no standard of truth or of virtue but the teaching of the Church, which was practically the teaching of each individual priest, it can scarcely be a matter of surprise that when the pagan and heretical barbarians invaded the orthodox provinces of the Empire, there should have been men who, like Sulvian, regarded them as superior in goodness no less than in valour to the dissolute and craven provincials. And the conquerors despised their new subjects even more for their vices than for their pusillanimity.

If this picture should be distrusted because it is drawn by one who does not recognize the supernatural origin of Christianity, it may be compared with the following representations by a person who was as unqualifiedly a believer in its divine character as any apologist of the present day, and who was its zealous and able defender, the late Isaac Taylor, in the work cited below. We give only two extracts, referring those who may wish to pursue the subject to the work itself. “Christian teachers, almost *from the very first*, and while they held the formal elements of truth, or, as it is called, orthodoxy, grossly misapprehended the genius and purport of Christianity; and, as a consequence of this mis-

<sup>1</sup> See the extracts from Sulvian in Isaac Taylor's *Ancient Christianity*, Vol. II.

apprehension, turned out of its course every Christian institute, and placed upon a false foundation every principle of virtue; and thus transmuted the Christian system into a scheme which could find no other fixed form than that of a foul superstition and a lawless despotism."—"Did Christianity encounter the rigid, punctilious, and self-righteous pietism of the Jew? In the collision, the Judaism of those of the Hebrew race who embraced the Gospel gave way to some extent and was christianized; and in return Christianity was judaized. Or did it meet the vain philosophy and platonism of the speculative Greek and Gnostic? It did so, and Platonism [he might have added Gnosticism] and Christianity were thenceforth intimately commingled. Did it impinge upon human society, then debauched in a most extraordinary degree? It did so, and with a violent revulsion it distorted its own principles of virtue in an equally extreme degree. Finally, did the religion of the New Testament, rational, spiritual, pure, confront the degrading superstitions of the pagan world? It did so, and on this ground, while it bore a clear testimony against the doctrines and the flagitious practices of polytheism, yet merged itself in the boundless superstition of the times as a system of fear, spiritual servitude, formality, scrupulosity, visible magnificence of worship, mystery, artifice, and juggle."<sup>1</sup>

No one who impartially investigates the subject will, we believe, deem this language exaggerated. It is probable he may really feel that the writer has rather extenuated the influence of the polytheism of the converts upon the creed of the Church. The obvious conclusion then appears to be, not merely that religion, even the Christian religion, is but one of the influences that mould the character of the individual or the institutions and customs of a people, but that the form in which it shall manifest itself depends much more upon the great causes which have made nations and races what they are than upon its own intrinsic power. Christianity has been allied with almost every form of government, and almost every state of society; and its own cha-

<sup>1</sup> Ancient Christianity, by Isaac Taylor, Vol. I. pp. 123, 127.

racter and the nature of its influence have correspondingly varied. But everywhere and at all times, alike in its early Eastern triumphs as in its later European development, and in the most austere as in the most licentious epochs, it has, with the immense mass of believers, failed to rule more than a small fraction of the life. It may be said that these masses are not really Christian, and doubtless there are strong reasons for such an assertion. This, however, while it frees Christianity from the reproach of having sanctioned or produced the vices of its professed believers and their low conceptions of God and of duty, to the same extent weakens the argument in its favour drawn from the number of its converts, and brings it in this respect very nearly to the level of the contemporary philosophies. They also proclaimed the unity of God and the brotherhood of man, and enforced the practice of temperance, chastity, and justice: but they failed because they could only influence the few; as upon this hypothesis was the case with Christianity itself.

At the present moment we appear to see a prospect of the ultimate triumph of Christianity, or rather of the preponderance of the countries which profess Christianity over those who have remained faithful to their old creeds. Sometimes the trader opens the way for the missionary, and sometimes the missionary opens the way for the trader, and either or both furnish a pretext for armed intervention and conquest. And undoubtedly the new races in Europe and North America who call themselves Christian exhibit a vitality and force which strikingly contrast with the seeming feebleness and decay of the old heathen races. But it is only within the last century and a half that this superiority has become apparent in relation to Asia; and it is to be feared that it is mainly due to the un-Christian side of our political and social organization. It is not by a cultivation of the virtues that Christ enforces, nor by dint of strenuous efforts to work out their own salvation, that the nations of the West have gained their warlike aptitudes, and have perfected their military discipline and their munitions and instruments of war,

so as to become irresistible when brought into conflict with troops armed and trained after the fashion of past centuries. These are the product of what Mr. St. George Mivart calls the pagan reaction—the cultivation of the manly virtues instead of the ascetic, and of reason instead of faith; the revolt indeed of intellect against dogma, and of manhood against priesthood. They have been associated with free institutions and free thought, with the independent power and growth of the State, and the enforced submission of churches to laws which the State has imposed; and they have been associated also with a strong and orderly government and with the supremacy of the law. And these are, after all, precarious sources of superiority. On the one side stands the Church of Rome claiming supreme authority over the entire life of the individual and the entire organization of the State; avowedly making this claim for the purpose of stifling investigation, and of reproducing as far as possible the mediæval condition of knowledge and morals, and ready to avail itself of help from any quarter, in order to give effect to her pretensions. On the other side there are doctrines widely current, and still spreading, threatening the disintegration and dissolution of existing institutions, and societies working towards their realization. These may possibly prove as effectual a solvent to existing social and political relations as did Christianity itself to those subsisting when it was first preached. And if both of these dangers are escaped, as we may hope they will be, is there not some question how far traditional Christianity will survive, or indeed any doctrine which connects the favour of God exclusively with a belief in Christ, or with anything but such right conduct and kindly feelings as may be manifested in connection with all forms of belief?

Nor is it perhaps quite certain that an impartial observer interested only in the welfare of humanity would desire that Christianity should triumph, if its effects upon the peoples still waiting to be converted are to be judged by those it has produced upon the peoples brought under its influence during the

last five centuries. And whatever may be its future destiny—whether, renewed and purified, it is to form a basis of national life and progress—or, re-asserting its mediæval pretensions, is to enslave once more the intellect and the conscience—or whether it is to be replaced by some new form of faith more in harmony with the wider and more accurate knowledge of the age—a consideration of the results it has produced since it became triumphant, should prepare us to find errors of opinion and imperfections of character associated with its original development.



## CHAPTER I.

### FORMATION OF CHURCH AT JERUSALEM.

Uncertainty of materials—Possible interview of Apostles with Jesus in Galilee—Their return to Jerusalem with disciples—And probably mother and brothers of Jesus—Election of Matthias so related as to exclude claim of Paul—Gift of tongues—Cure of impotent man—Arrest of Peter and John—Consideration of general picture of state of the Church—Communitic—And expecting immediate return of the Christ—Surrender of property by those who possessed it—Probable ultimate reluctance to consummate the sacrifice—Punishment of recusant members typified by story of Ananias and Sapphira—Would provoke action of authorities—Unpopularity of sect in consequence—Death of Stephen—Persecution and flight of the Church—General considerations.

WHEN the crucifixion of Jesus dispelled for the time the hopes with which the disciples had accompanied him from Galilee, we may believe that their first feeling was one of utter despair. Whether or not he had foreseen and foretold his death, and had at the same time predicted his speedy resurrection, it seems quite certain that any such predictions were forgotten or disbelieved by the Apostles. But of their conduct under this seeming death-blow to their expectations, and of the process by means of which despair gave place to renewed hope, it would seem that we must be content to be ignorant. The varying and inconsistent accounts that we possess show only the vague rumours current in the Church on the subject,—rumours, however, which became more precise in proportion as the writers were removed by time and distance from the events they profess to record. Such rumours, it is clear, can form no basis for a history. To take one only of the many difficulties that our present narratives suggest. Are we to suppose that the disciples, immediately on receiving intel-

ligence of the resurrection, departed for Galilee, in accordance with the previous promise of Jesus to meet them there, and the message brought to them by the women who visited the sepulchre;<sup>1</sup> or that they remained in Jerusalem, in accordance with the express injunction of Jesus himself, delivered to them on the evening of the day of his resurrection?<sup>2</sup> Or are we to believe, with orthodox harmonists, that at first they remained in Jerusalem in disobedience to the message which directed them to proceed to Galilee; and afterwards departed for Galilee in contempt of the direct command to remain in Jerusalem? If we were merely attempting to construct a story upon the basis of the evangelical narratives which should be consistent and probable, and should show the events as they might have happened, there are many possible combinations of our materials which would fulfil these conditions. But the results of any such attempt must be altogether illusory; and the more complete they were in appearance, the more deceptive they would be in reality. For, when feeling and imagination have had their full play in the development of tradition, and different writers have embodied just those portions of the legend which fell in with their object in writing, or were current in the circles from which they drew their materials, a picture in which every one of the details finds an appropriate place cannot but be incorrect and misleading. Even if the occurrences could have happened in such a manner, it would be quite certain that they did not.

From the account given in the first two Gospels, we should be disposed to conclude that the disciples, on receiving the intelligence brought by the two Marys of the empty tomb and of the message they had been charged to deliver, did depart for Galilee; and that while there something took place to confirm their belief in the resurrection of Jesus, and in his speedy re-appearance to establish his kingdom, which subsequently induced them to return to Jerusalem. But there are difficulties in the way of such a conclusion, not so much from any intrinsic improbability in the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvi. 32, xxviii. 7; Mark xiv. 28, xvi. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xxiv. 49.

supposition—since, if we could accept these facts as true, it would be easy to find an intelligible explanation of them—as from its doubtful authority. The account of the interview with Jesus upon the mountain mentioned in the first Gospel is, in its present form, certainly not earlier than the latter half of the second century, as appears from the formula of baptism; and the interview itself is not mentioned anywhere else. Still it is difficult to suppose that both of the first two Gospels should have preserved the promise of Jesus to go before to Galilee, and the message which directed the disciples to proceed thither, unless there had been a distinct tradition of their having obeyed the injunction, and having there seen their risen Lord. And if so, this must have been the earliest tradition; for after the third Gospel had been written, or after the tradition which it represents had become current in the Church, we can scarcely believe that any story inconsistent with that could have sprung up or obtained acceptance. There can be no doubt that the Apostles, subsequently to the death of Jesus, resided in Jerusalem as leaders of the church of that place. It would be natural, therefore, for all believers who lived outside of Palestine to suppose that, as Jerusalem had been the place of the crucifixion and resurrection, so it would also have been of the appearances. And when once the fact of his having appeared there was accepted, no one would have thought of writing a story which, by implication, declared it to be untrue.

We see, indeed, something of this in the fourth Gospel, the original portion of which represented the appearances of Jesus as taking place only in Jerusalem; though the account it gives of these appearances is scarcely reconcilable with that contained in the third. It is not impossible that the interview in Galilee on the borders of the lake, described in the supplementary chapter, was due to a subsisting tradition of the visit of the disciples to that place, which it was thought needful to recognize, as well as to a desire of furnishing an answer to cavils founded upon the reported doubts of some of the Apostles as to the

actual resurrection of Jesus,<sup>1</sup> by showing that the principal of them had abundant proof of his real physical existence.

If, however, the earliest tradition was represented in the two Gospels, which are assumed to express, the one, the voice of the church of Jerusalem, and the other, that of Peter, the natural inference would be that no appearance to the Apostles in Jerusalem was known to the believers resident there. And this inference is not affected by any doubts as to the authorship of these Gospels, since, in this respect at least, they must be supposed to represent an original tradition. This still leaves it an open question whether the journey to Galilee and the solemn meeting there might not have been due to the necessity which was felt to give a firmer basis to the belief in the resurrection than could be furnished by the reports of the women who were its first, and, so far as Jerusalem was concerned, its only witnesses, rather than to any real event. And this question is one which from the data at our disposal it is impossible to answer. It was not till many years after the incidents, whatever they were, that any motive would be felt for committing them to writing; and then the motive would arise, not so much for the sake of believers, who had the direct statement of the Apostles themselves, or at least the report of those who had heard it from them, but to satisfy the doubts of inquirers, or to answer the cavils of unbelievers. And histories thus composed must always be to some extent subject to doubt, even if confined within the limits of the natural.

But the uncertainty which rests upon the precise circumstances that gave rise to a belief in the resurrection of Jesus, furnishes no reason for doubting the substantial fact that the Apostles themselves were persuaded of its truth, any more than our ignorance as to their immediate movements after the crucifixion prevents us from believing that they were subsequently established in Jerusalem at the head of the sect of the Nazarenes or Galileans; a sect whose distinguishing tenet was a belief in

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxviii. 17.

Jesus as the Messiah, and in his resurrection and second coming. If, however, we attempt to go beyond these general conclusions, and try to construct a history of their proceedings, we feel at once the unsubstantial character of our materials. We can at the utmost only employ them for the purpose of guiding us in our conjectures.

As the crucifixion took place on the Friday, and the next day was the Sabbath, it would be improbable that the disciples should have left their place of refuge in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem before the morning of the first day of the week; on which day we may suppose they received the account of the visit of the women to the tomb, and of the disappearance of the body of Jesus. If this news were indeed accompanied by a message directing them to proceed to Galilee, it would be natural to suspect the presence of some friendly agency in the removal of the body, and that it had been found possible to restore animation. But the difficulties in the way of such a supposition appear at first sight insuperable. We are not, indeed, entitled to reject it peremptorily; for, upon any theory, we are justified in attempting to find an intelligible explanation of the alleged facts, before concluding them to be beyond the scope of natural law, and therefore either rejecting them as impossible, or believing them as miraculous. And if, in reality, the disciples did meet Jesus in Galilee after his crucifixion, such an explanation would be found in the assumption that the secret friends who had obtained possession of his body had succeeded in restoring him to life, and had removed him to Galilee for the sake of security, where they had allowed him to have one or more interviews with his chosen disciples. And it is not, perhaps, a sufficient answer to this to say that such conduct would convict both Jesus and his friends of fraud, for they might regard the resuscitation, or the escape from death, as miraculous, and might believe that so signal an interposition was a clear proof of the divine approval of his mission, and a pledge that he should be shortly enabled to return and establish his kingdom. Nor would the



Apostles, in their first transports of joy in finding alive and free him whom they had seen delivered as a prisoner into the hands of his enemies, and, apparently, put to death, be disposed to scrutinize the circumstances too narrowly. To them also the very fact of his having been restored to life after death had seemingly occurred, might well be a proof of divine intervention, and mark him out emphatically as that Messiah in whom they had believed. That a victim should have escaped with life from the grasp of Pilate; that priest, and Pharisee, and Gentile ruler, should have combined to compass the death of one solitary prisoner, and have failed to accomplish their purpose; that the very grave should have given up its prey, and have restored to his followers the Master whose loss they deplored,—were circumstances so exceptional, that they might well warrant to their minds a belief in their supernatural character, and inspire them with a full conviction that he whom God had thus preserved would, by the same divine aid, be enabled to establish the kingdom of heaven.

It may, indeed, be objected to this reasoning, that the sight of a weak and suffering man, who must presumably have died in a few days, could not have given any confidence or enthusiasm to the Apostles. We must remember, however, that the various stories of martyrdom in the early Church show that the faith of the brethren in the miraculous interventions which for a time baffled the rage of the persecutors, was not in any way affected by the circumstance that these ultimately effected their object. Fires may refuse to scorch, or may be miraculously extinguished; wild beasts may lie down in peace by the side of their intended victims; pity may even stop the arm of the executioner; but still the martyr is put to death at last, while his fellow-christians almost lose sight of his fate in their feeling of admiration for the accompanying wonders. And in the supposed case of Jesus, he would have absolutely escaped from the death which his enemies believed they had inflicted, and have been restored to freedom and the society of his friends. Even we, with our

modern habits of thought, would be satisfied with an escape or rescue which secured for a time the safety of some sufferer for the cause of freedom or of truth, although he might ultimately die from the effect of the pains he had endured. And much more would this be the case in the circle of the Apostles and their friends.

And with regard to the subsequent death, we must remember that the Apostles could not expect the return of Jesus from heaven to establish his kingdom until they knew that he had left the world, and this death might be the necessary condition of their faith in his having been taken up into heaven. But if God had once raised him from the dead, they could have no difficulty in believing that He would in the appointed time restore him to earth; either to re-animate the body he had left behind, or clothed in some new and glorious body corresponding to his new character. We experience a difficulty in realizing such a state of feeling; but this difficulty arises, partly from our altered standpoint with regard to the nature of Jesus—for even those who are most firmly convinced that he was a real human being cannot altogether escape the influence of the universal adoration of which he is the object—and partly from our attributing to the Apostles the ideas subsequently current in the Church with regard to his actual bodily ascension. But Paul certainly did not believe that Jesus had taken his material body to heaven with him, and the Apostles regarded him as a man, so that from neither point of view would there be any such difficulty as we imagine. The former, and those who thought with him, would suppose that it was a spiritual, or rather an aerial body that had been taken up into heaven; the latter would suppose that his shade, instead of dwelling in Sheol, had been admitted into Heaven, and would wait with patience until it should return to re-animate the natural body.

It would be altogether a mistake to apply to the Apostles the same tests by which we should estimate our own probable judgment or feelings in analogous circumstances, especially as such

tests would only be applicable to ourselves in our calmer moods, and would be valueless in relation to our conduct in moments of deep excitement. If we wish to know what were likely to have been their feelings at this time, we should look rather to the scenes at revival meetings, or at the exhibition of some modern miracle, where the contagion passes from one to another, until all see and hear whatever any one among them may imagine, and no one pauses to inquire how far the manifestations are real or consistent. If Jesus had indeed been restored to life after death had apparently supervened, that alone might be sufficient to produce a state of exaltation which would predispose them to look upon everything as possible, and to disregard all seeming difficulties and impossibilities. They did not, as we may fancy that we should, sit down calmly to weigh the apparent evidence of their senses against the presumption of the permanence of natural law, or consider how far the ultimate death of Jesus was consistent with their belief in his Messianic character. Their faith, too, would "laugh at impossibilities," and, inspired by the seeming proof of divine power which they had witnessed, would regard all obstacles as nothing. God would choose His own time for the work, but its accomplishment was certain and could not be distant.

There does not, consequently, appear to be anything in the circumstances necessarily to exclude the supposition that the belief of the Apostles was founded upon an actual interview with the resuscitated Jesus in Galilee, whither he had been removed by friends who, having taken possession of his body, had found that life was not extinct, and had succeeded in restoring him from his temporary trance. But then it is difficult to understand how the record of that interview could have been so completely lost as has been the case, for the account given in the first Gospel is certainly not the original version, and the last verses of the second, which might be expected to contain it, have been lost, and their place supplied by a later interpolation. Possibly, however, the actual facts were too prosaic in their character to

allow free scope for the imagination, and the legend found more ample room for its development in a region where it was not trammelled by any definite tradition. Or it might be that the discourses originally attributed to Jesus on the occasion were unsuitable to the altered position of the Church, when his second coming had been so unexpectedly delayed.<sup>1</sup> Or was it that, when the new faith had penetrated beyond the limits of Judæa, it was assumed as a matter of course that the appearances must have occurred in Jerusalem, the scene of the crucifixion and the place in which the Apostles subsequently resided? It is possible, indeed, that all of these various influences co-operated. But where the materials are so scanty and discordant, it is idle to attempt to form any positive conclusion. We can say little more than that the earliest tradition points to Galilee as the place in which the Apostles met their risen Master, and that, if the tradition is well founded, the circumstance is most easily explained by the hypothesis, that after the apparently dead body of Jesus had been delivered to his friends, it had been found possible to restore life, and that such seeming recovery, or real escape, from death was regarded as the work of God, and as conclusively proving him to be the Messiah. But it is also quite possible that the belief in his resurrection arose from one of those inexplicable appearances of which so many are related, and that the tradition of the formal meeting in Galilee sprang up in Jerusalem, where it was known that no such meeting had taken place. That something occurred to produce the belief is unquestionable, but the narratives we possess do not enable us to say positively what that something was. And it seems too much to ask an unbiassed inquirer to accept such a miracle merely on the ground of the belief of twelve or fifteen persons, obviously not the least credulous members of a proverbially credulous people. If sixty generations of Christians have since believed it

<sup>1</sup> May it not be that the discourses connected with the sending forth of the Twelve (Matt. x. 4, et seq.) were originally supposed to have been spoken by Jesus at the final interview in Galilee? Certainly many of the injunctions and warnings are more appropriate to that period than to the period with which they are now connected.

upon their report, it is quite possible that they might have believed it at first upon the report of one of their number; and when once the belief was formed, it would be almost a matter of course that more than one should be persuaded that they also had seen the risen Jesus. It is a practical exemplification of the parable of the grain of mustard-seed. The smallest incident falling upon a soil prepared for its reception became a germ from which sprang up and grew a tree; but that which has produced these effects is not the fact, but the belief; and the firmest subjective faith does not necessarily imply any corresponding objective reality.<sup>1</sup>

We are, therefore, compelled to leave it uncertain whether the belief in the resurrection arose in consequence solely of incidents occurring in Jerusalem—the empty tomb and the message to the women—or whether it was confirmed by an actual interview with Jesus in Galilee; and we are equally uncertain where and under what circumstances the Apostles began to preach the resurrection and second coming of Jesus. It may be said that the latter question is answered by the Acts of the Apostles; but even from the orthodox standpoint this is not necessarily the case, since the most conservative critics are compelled to admit the omission of many events of capital importance; and the first preaching of the kingdom may have been one of these. Indeed, they must assume one most important omission here, as the work contains no reference to the visit of the Apostles to Galilee and the interview there. As, however, Jerusalem was from a very early period the head-quarters of the society, we may suppose that whatever was done in the interval that preceded their return was only pre-

<sup>1</sup> We cannot better illustrate the persistency and power of an unfounded belief than by the following extract from Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," art. Sadducees:—"A great belief was thus built up upon a great fiction. Early teaching and custom supplied the place of evidence; faith in an imaginary fact produced results as striking as could have flowed from the fact itself; and the doctrine—enshrining convictions and hopes deeply rooted in the human heart—has triumphed for nearly 1800 years. . . . This doctrine—the pledge of eternal life—is still maintained by the majority, and it will probably continue to be the creed of millions long after the present generation of mankind has passed away from the earth."



liminary. By whatever means and in whatever place they were convinced of the resurrection of Jesus, Jerusalem was to be the scene of his re-appearance ; and if, as is possible, they had been led to believe that they should not have preached in all the cities of Judah before that event, it would be from Jerusalem as a centre that their operations were to be conducted. But if so, the Apostles would naturally, on their return to that place, be accompanied by their adherents in Galilee, and would on their arrival essay to re-unite the scattered members of the society who resided in the city,—those who had been won to the cause of Jesus in the interval between his triumphant entry and his seizure by the authorities, but who had been disheartened and dispersed when they believed him to have died upon the cross. To them they would announce that they had themselves seen and spoken with him, and such an announcement would, we may believe, suffice with the majority to rekindle the faith which had for the moment become extinct.

If, on the other hand, we suppose that the Apostles had remained in Jerusalem, we must conclude that Jesus, or his followers in his name, had been more successful in appealing to the people, and had gone further in forming a party in that city than we should judge was the case from the story told in the Gospels. If within so few weeks after his death those who remained faithful to his cause, in spite of its apparent failure, were as many as one hundred and twenty, we can hardly doubt that his adherents prior to the crucifixion were very far more numerous. We cannot, indeed, attach any absolute value to the details of the story ; but this is one of the matters in which tradition, or perhaps even the records of the society, as suggested by the use of the word “names,” may have preserved the true number. But although it is possible that all of these might have been in Jerusalem at the time of the crucifixion, either permanent residents there, or having accompanied Jesus from Galilee, yet we are, on the whole, disposed to imagine that the Apostles had visited Galilee, and that when they returned to Jerusalem it was in the

full faith that Jesus would almost immediately re-appear. In that event they would naturally be accompanied by all the brethren from Galilee, who, probably in the first instance, formed the majority of the Church. Certainly their superiority must have been recognized, since it was from among them (none others possessing the requisite qualification) that a successor to Judas was chosen.

This view appears to receive a partial corroboration from the circumstance, that when the society is settled in Jerusalem, the mother and brothers of Jesus are with them. They might, indeed, have accompanied him from Galilee, expecting to witness the establishment of his kingdom; but as there is no intimation in either of the first two Gospels of their presence either during the journey or at the crucifixion, it seems on the whole more probable that they joined the party at a later period. This notice of their presence, however, and the subsequent silence of the writer on the subject, illustrates the incompleteness of the history. This is the latest mention of the mother of Jesus in connection with the Church, but his brothers are referred to in the Epistle to the Corinthians<sup>1</sup> in a manner which shows that they occupied a recognized position in the Church, apparently next to the Apostles. And we see from Eusebius that their importance was recognized by early Christian writers. Their position may, indeed, be supposed to be one of dignity rather than of authority, since they are never mentioned in connection with doctrine, and it is the Apostles who are the foundation of the Church. Still they could not have been without influence, nor would the original records of the early Church have altogether omitted to notice their presence and action. A work, therefore, which professes to detail the history of that Church, and is altogether silent with regard to them, not only convicts itself of incompleteness, but is exposed to the suspicion of partiality.

The journey to Galilee, with the arrangements for transferring the residence of the brethren and their families to Jerusalem,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 5.

and their settlement in the city, would have occupied a longer, probably a much longer time than is allowed for in the Acts. And it will be seen that the account of the election of Matthias, the first act of the Church, contains hints that this had been the case. Peter speaks of the purchase of a field by Judas with the money paid to him, his death, and the calling of the field *Aceldama*; either because of its being bought with the price of blood, or of the death of Judas its purchaser; events which we can scarcely compress within the period of five or six weeks.<sup>1</sup> It is true that no historical value can be attached to the speech; but the introduction of these circumstances appears to imply a feeling on the part of the author of a longer interval between the crucifixion and the election than the present form of the story allows.

The description of the election of Matthias to supply the place left vacant by the treason of Judas, shows the importance that was supposed to be attached to the mystical number, twelve, and the qualifications that were deemed essential to the office; and in both of these respects it contains an implicit contradiction to the claims of Paul. The defection of Judas absolutely excluded him from the number. It was not as though he had been martyred, or had even died while still faithful to his trust. In either of those cases the number would have remained complete. On the appearing of Jesus, any who had died would be raised, so that there would still be twelve to occupy the twelve thrones. Judas, however, by his treachery had created a vacancy which it was requisite to supply; but when this was done there was neither need nor room for any addition. That there should be thirteen Apostles, as there would have been if Paul were included, was contrary to the design of the institution as indicated by the Synoptics. And the qualification required would equally exclude him; for he had never seen Jesus during his life, and

<sup>1</sup> The meeting to choose a successor to Judas is represented as having occurred some time, but how long is uncertain, before the day of Pentecost, which was seven weeks after the crucifixion.

his early relation to the Church was that of a foe, who by the very position he assumed repudiated a belief in the resurrection.

According to the account in the Acts, the Apostles made no attempt to preach in the first instance, but were satisfied to wait in prayerful expectation for the promised re-appearance; and their first preaching was determined by the circumstance that a concourse of people had been drawn together by the report of some unusual manifestations among the brethren at one of their meetings. The details of the scene as related represent the manner in which Christians of another generation were accustomed to regard the gift of tongues as possessed by the Apostles; but we may be sure that they have been coloured by the author or by tradition.<sup>1</sup> And if we could suppose Luke to be the author, there must have been conscious invention on his part. As the companion of Paul, he would have seen enough of these displays to be aware that, although persons who were favourably disposed might be able to see in them an exhibition of supernatural power, no one could suppose that he was addressed in his own native language.

As the gift of tongues was a permanent endowment of the Church, and as those who possessed the gift, and many of those who witnessed its manifestation, regarded it as a proof of the direct action of the Spirit of God, there is nothing to forbid our supposing that it was originally exercised by the Apostles and their followers at Jerusalem, and was one of the instruments of attracting new converts. And it is not difficult, with our wider experience of the effect of religious excitement when shared by numbers, to understand how the state of exaltation produced by the belief in the resurrection, and by the expectation of the immediate return of Jesus,<sup>2</sup> maintained and intensified by the daily meetings of the brethren, and stimulated by united prayer and

<sup>1</sup> We have already referred to one of the influences that may be apparently traced in the present form of the story.

<sup>2</sup> Or of the immediate bestowal of some divine influence.

exciting addresses, might so work upon some of their number as to compel the involuntary utterance of unintelligible sounds; and how, these being regarded as the marks of an indwelling spirit speaking through the favoured members, the contagion should seize upon one after another until all were possessed by the same overmastering impulse. We can understand, too, how friendly spectators, believing that these utterances were involuntary, should also regard them as supernatural, and see in them a proof of divine inspiration; and it would be a matter of course that the majority would regard them as proofs of madness or drunkenness. And then it would be quite possible that Peter, as the spokesman of the party, might make this imputation the ground of a vindication of himself and the rest, and might take the opportunity of preaching Jesus as the Messiah, shown to be such by his resurrection from the dead, of which this supernatural exhibition was a consequence and a proof. These probabilities, however, while they suggest that there was some actual fact which served as a starting-point for the legend, go a very small way in support of the narrative as transmitted to us. All, perhaps, that we can safely infer is, that the preaching of Jesus as the Messiah, and of his resurrection and speedy return to establish the kingdom of heaven, was facilitated, and that the numbers of the society were increased, by the seemingly supernatural phenomena by which it was accompanied.

This display of the gift of tongues was, we are informed, speedily followed by a miracle of healing—the first specific miracle wrought in Jerusalem of which we have any record outside of the fourth Gospel. A man lame from his mother's womb, having asked alms of Peter and John as they were about to enter the Temple, is healed by an invocation of the name of Jesus of Nazareth, and by force of the power residing in that name.<sup>1</sup> This miracle, we are told, first attracted the attention of the authorities to the new sect, and, coupled with their preach-

<sup>1</sup> "The name (of Jesus) through faith in his name," Acts iii. 16. "By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth . . . doth this man stand whole," iv. 10.



ing "through Jesus the resurrection of the dead," led to the seizure of the two Apostles, and to their being brought before the Council, who listen in silent wonder to their defence, admit in their private conference that a notable miracle had been wrought, content themselves with forbidding Peter and John to employ that name for the future, allow their open defiance of the prohibition, and quietly dismiss them to their homes, unable to find an excuse for punishing them, and fearing the people!

It is needless and would be idle to attempt to follow the history of the infant Church any further in detail; for, obviously, we are here altogether within the sphere of legend. We cannot accept the story even as the transformed representation of some natural event; for the substantial agreement between the miracle here ascribed to Peter and John, and that afterwards ascribed to Paul and Barnabas at Lystra—bearing in mind the obvious purpose of the writer—throws great doubt on both. And even if we were to admit the working of a seeming or real cure, and the arrest of the Apostles because they were preaching the resurrection of the dead, it is quite certain that the scene before the Council must have been very different from what has been depicted. Offenders charged with sedition or heresy, when brought before the authorities whose power or whose doctrines they deny, would be treated in a far more summary manner; nor would the high-priest and his colleagues have admitted among themselves that these men had really wrought a miracle;<sup>1</sup> nor could any report of their private deliberations have reached the writer. It would, indeed, be easy by a few suppressions and assumptions to give a plausible form to the incidents, but we should have no right to suppose that the events really happened in that manner. They might have; but the chances against it are indefinite—

<sup>1</sup> If we were to imagine that they had a private conference among themselves which led to the release of the Apostles, what they would have said was, that the men were two clever impostors; but that as they had for the moment succeeded in deluding the populace, the best way was to let them go rather than risk a disturbance, as the trick must soon be exposed.

almost equal, indeed, to the various ways in which a fertile imagination might re-cast the story. And though some of these attempted restorations might be more probable than others, this would be no ground for accepting any of them; since, although improbabilities such as we have indicated are conclusive against the reception of a legendary history, their absence is no proof of its accuracy. And we have here no possible means of control or verification, as we know nothing of the subject from any other sources. Any attempt, therefore, to construct a detailed history of the early Church on the basis of the Acts, either by so altering the incidents as to bring them within the limits of the natural, or by referring them to exaggerated or inaccurate descriptions of mere subjective impressions, is necessarily futile, excepting as an exercise of the imagination. Whoever wishes to see in what light the condition and practices of the first disciples were regarded by a believer of the next generation, and in what manner he conceived of their relation to the Jewish rulers and Jewish people, of the causes and character of the persecution they encountered, and of their behaviour before their persecutors, may do this in the Acts of the Apostles. But if he wishes to ascertain the actual character of the incidents—what it was that provoked the intervention of the authorities, and what were the scope and object of their measures of repression—he must endeavour to gain an independent point of view, using the story in the Acts only as material to guide him in his conclusions. The picture he may draw will not even then have any pretensions to absolute accuracy, but its errors may be expected to be confined within comparatively narrow limits.

Looking, then, at the story as we have it in its broad, general outlines, and omitting for the present all consideration of details, we see the Apostles preaching the resurrection and Messiahship of Jesus in a manner which caused some turbulent manifestations; and forming a society upon that basis. The members of this society are admitted by baptism into the name of Jesus, and are, apparently, expected or encouraged to devote the whole of

their possessions to the support of the brethren; and they, thus freed from the necessity of labour, pass their time in acts of public and private devotion. And during this time we gather that they were regarded with favour by the people, though they provoked the interference of their rulers. Then we are told that a member of the society attempted to deceive the Apostles as to the value of his property, keeping back a part of the price for which it had been sold, and that this was followed by the judicial infliction of death, not upon himself alone, but upon his wife also. After this, deacons are chosen for the purpose of securing an equal distribution of the funds of the society among its members, one of whom is brought before the Council upon a charge of blasphemy, when in an access of popular fury he is put to death by stoning. And then measures are taken to break up the society, which result in the expulsion from Jerusalem of all the members except the Apostles. And in a story which is legendary and not mythical, we may accept this as approximately representing the course of events.

From this point of view, the opposition which the new sect encountered at first from the authorities, and afterwards from the populace, and the final proceedings which drove them from the city, become intelligible. The preaching through Jesus of the resurrection of the dead obviously implied his speedy return to overthrow the existing government, and to set up his throne in Jerusalem. The Apostles, however, would not be permitted, any more than John or than Jesus himself, to preach doctrines necessarily subversive of the existing order of the State; especially when they made these doctrines the basis of a communistic society. No ancient people, certainly not the Jews, had accepted the modern practice of permitting organized attacks upon the essential principles on which the very existence of the State and its right to demand the obedience of its subjects depend, nor would remain indifferent spectators of an attempt to found a society antagonistic to the Government and working towards its extinction. And they would not be any the more favourably

disposed to the new society because it was founded upon an illusion and supported by imposture; for as such they would regard the belief in the resurrection of Jesus, and the other alleged miracles. We can therefore quite understand how the preaching, not the resurrection of the dead, for that was a received Jewish doctrine, nor even the resurrection of Jesus, but the immediate establishment of the kingdom of heaven through his instrumentality, connected as it was with disorderly gatherings of the people, should under the circumstances have been forbidden. And we can understand also that the Apostles, to whom the resurrection of Jesus was a solemn fact,—who were persuaded that they “should not have gone over the cities of Judah” before his re-appearance,—and who (possibly) believed that they possessed a miraculous gift of healing, should disregard this prohibition, and should have been more than once seized and imprisoned in consequence. We can quite understand also that there should have been some marvellous escapes; for the prisons of Jerusalem might be no more able to retain Peter and John than those of Dublin recently proved to retain Head-centre Stephens. And it would be quite in the ordinary course of events that the new doctrines of equality and fraternity, in the form they then assumed, should have obtained adherents among the inferior officers of the Sanhedrim and the keepers of the prison. But it is evident that the agency, whatever it might be, that permitted escapes from prison when its proceedings were shrouded in darkness, was unable to secure the leaders of the society from arrest and scourging, or, in the case of Stephen, from death itself, when these were inflicted in the presence of the rulers or in the face of the public. And this irresistibly suggests a human instrumentality; since we cannot suppose that a divine interference would be less effective by reason of the publicity of the occasion, or would have failed to be exerted when its intervention was most urgently needed.

While, then, this was the light in which the rising sect was regarded by the Sanhedrim and the wealthier classes, it would

appear under a very different aspect to the populace. The disciples proved their sincerity by their relinquishment of the ordinary means of subsistence, in reliance upon the immediate fulfilment of their expectations, and by the voluntary sacrifice of their property by those who were rich; and they were zealous in the performance of the requirements of the Law and in the public and private worship of Jehovah. With the Jewish multitude it was not thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead, for their sacred books recorded more than one instance of such raising, and they all looked forward to a personal resurrection in their own case whenever the Messiah should appear. There would, consequently, be no invincible prepossession, founded upon a conviction of the irrevocable nature of the change which death had produced, to prevent their acceptance of the marvel which the Apostles proclaimed; and many who were not convinced of its truth might nevertheless regard the disciples as sincere though mistaken enthusiasts, and look with a kindly interest on their proceedings. We can therefore understand their reported popularity, and believe that many of the poorer and some even from among the wealthier classes might join them. Looking, however, at the probable population of Jerusalem,—not more, according to the most reliable authorities, than from forty to fifty thousand persons,—we must reject as incredible the asserted number of these accessions; for five thousand men would be nearly a third of the adult male inhabitants of the city. Such a number, too, is inconsistent with the subsequent account of their proceedings, which implies that they formed a small separated body, not too numerous to allow of constant intercommunion for religious exercises. Their sympathizers might be many, but, at this period, the members of the sect could at the utmost only have amounted to as many hundreds as the story describes thousands, and, probably, even this would be an exaggerated estimate.

Still we can well imagine that those who did believe in the Apostle's doctrine, and had joined the society under the



influence of that belief, would shrink from no sacrifice that would be demanded of them. It could be but a little while, and he whom God had raised from the dead would return to the earth he had for a moment left, to set up his kingdom in Jerusalem. It might be a few months, but it might be only a few weeks or even days; and when he did return, nothing would profit them but to have secured a high place in his favour; and this could best be attained by services rendered to those whom he had acknowledged as his brethren. It would be misleading to judge of the conduct of the infant Church by that of churches or individuals who may profess the same belief at the present time; for these last, however sincere they may be, cannot altogether escape the influence of the practical disillusion resulting from the proved failure of so many previous expectations as assured as their own. But there have been in the history of the Church many periods in which faith in the immediate coming of Christ has induced hundreds to give up all they possessed to the brethren, represented by the clergy, that so they might be taken with him to heaven; and at this time everything contributed to intensify the feelings of the disciples. The report of the Apostles as to what they had seen, the vision with which so many believed themselves to have been favoured, the wonderful displays of the tongues, and the miracles which a fervent faith is almost sure to find where they are looked for, would combine to produce and maintain a state of uncalculating enthusiasm, ready to respond to, and even to anticipate, any demands that might be made. We do not indeed suppose that the surrender of the whole of their possessions was demanded of all, or even of any, in the first instance; but only that the necessity of providing for the daily wants of the poorer brethren who had abandoned their former residence, or their former pursuits, was met by contributions from such as possessed superfluous means. We must suppose that, under the influence of the hopes by which they were animated, and the spirit of emulation kindled by the example of some of the more liberal, one after another would be induced to

give up all he possessed ; until what was originally a free-will offering became first expected as a custom, and was afterwards exacted as an obligation. But we may suppose that, with the ordinary adherence to the forms of language once sanctioned by usage, even after they have ceased to correspond with realities, it was still described as a free-will offering altogether in the discretion of the donor.<sup>1</sup>

Such at least appears to be the natural and, indeed, the only inference to be drawn from the story when regarded in the light of our knowledge of other analogous institutions ; though, of course, we may arrive at a different conclusion if our attention is concentrated upon detached passages. But then it would be impossible when the original enthusiasm abated, as was sure to be the case if only by reason of the delay in the appearance of Jesus, but that some of the members would shrink from consummating the sacrifice they had contemplated, and would endeavour to keep back for themselves a part at least of that which the society claimed. Any such attempt, however, in a small community, where the nature and amount of every one's property would be tolerably well known, and where all would be interested in the detection of any attempt to evade the common obligation, would be almost certainly discovered, and would naturally provoke severe measures of coercion. It is to the ineffaceable recollection of such measures that we probably owe the story we now possess of the offence and punishment of Ananias and Sapphira. But though proceedings of this character might be efficacious for the moment, they must inevitably deepen the feelings of dissatisfaction within the body itself, and, at the same time, operate to deter others from joining it, so that they could only accelerate the inevitable collapse.

And while such proceedings would affect the internal condition of the society, necessarily producing discontent and murmurings, they must also have provoked the intervention of the authorities. Even from the orthodox standpoint it is impossible

<sup>1</sup> Like the "benevolences" under our early kings.

to suppose that the Sanhedrim, who were roused to interference by the report of a miracle of healing, would stand idly by when they heard of miracles which had inflicted death upon two citizens guiltless of any legal wrong. Nor can it be supposed that the friends of Ananias would have failed to invoke justice at their hands against the authors of his death. These friends must have known of his connection with the society of the Nazarenes, and something at least of the obligations that connection imposed. Probably they would be aware of his intention, while they might even have had a share in prompting, to reserve to himself some remnants of his fortune; and they could not fail to connect his disappearance and that of his wife with this intention. The proceedings were doubtless kept as secret as possible, for acts of this nature are never proclaimed beyond the limits of the society, and generally only referred to vaguely and in euphemistic terms within those limits;<sup>1</sup> but it would at least be known that the two, Ananias and his wife, had attended a meeting of the society, and had never been seen alive since, and this would furnish a sufficient ground for demanding the action of the magistrate. And neither the friends of Ananias nor the Council would yield any credence to the assertion that the deaths were supernatural, or relax their efforts on that account. Such an assertion indeed, if believed, would only fix upon the Apostles the charge of using the worst and darkest forms of magic, and thus would have deepened and exasperated the feelings of enmity caused by the murders of which they were accused. But the Sanhedrim, Sadducees for the most part, and who neither believed in the resurrection of Jesus nor in the possibility of working miracles in his name, would ridicule the suggestion, and would persist in attributing the deaths to natural causes, and in

<sup>1</sup> The evidence with regard to trades' unions shows this. The story no doubt is told in the Acts without any suggestion of secrecy, but the Acts was one of the sacred, and therefore secret, books of the society, and was published at a distance from Palestine and after the destruction of Jerusalem. There is no reference to the incident in any of the early Christian writers. Obviously it was not one of the exercises of miraculous power which they cared to parade.

holding the members of the society responsible for them, and every modern jurist and magistrate would pronounce that they were right.<sup>1</sup>

It may indeed be said that the whole incident is an invention, or a mere legendary tale current among the brethren, and artistically reproduced by the author; and the latter is probably the case. But it is difficult not to suppose that some given facts lay at the base of the legend; and we may believe that the present form of the story arises from the desire of the writer to free the society from charges made against it, by transforming that which was essentially a system of human terrorism into an exceptional manifestation of Divine displeasure. At any rate, the story, taken as legend, implies proceedings on the part of the Apostles which it was the imperative duty of the State to repress. No commonwealth could tolerate the existence of a society within its bounds, however pure its motives and spiritual its aspirations, or even however true its doctrines, which punished the breach of its rules by death. And such acts could not fail to affect the estimation in which the society was held by the populace. The sect which was regarded with favour while its proceedings were spontaneous and voluntary, would be regarded with dislike and suspicion when it had hardened into an organization with a secret tribunal and sanguinary penalties. And if, as would be probable, it was impossible to obtain any direct proof which would bring home the suspected deaths, whether

<sup>1</sup> The suggestion that the deaths were miraculous leads to two alternative inquiries, according as we suppose the miracle to have been wrought by Peter or by God. In the former case, Peter, possessing the power of inflicting death miraculously, must be held responsible for its exercise, in the same manner as he would be for the employment of the cord or the dagger; and it would be difficult to find an act having more of the essential character of murder than killing a man and his wife because, though willing to devote a large portion of their property to the purposes of the association, they wished to retain a part for themselves, and for this purpose had under-stated the amount for which they had sold their possessions! And if the miracle is regarded as wrought directly by God himself, this, instead of raising the character of the act, only has the effect of lowering our conception of God to a level which we do not care to indicate. There are few acts of trades' unions which the members might not justify to themselves by this precedent.

of Ananias and his wife or of others, to specified individuals, so as to justify the infliction of punishment, this failure of justice would only render the rulers and the people more suspicious and hostile, and would make both more ready to enforce any punishment to which the proceedings of the society or of any of its members might render them liable.

We cannot, therefore, determine whether the event which has been transmitted to us under the form of the martyrdom of Stephen, was the direct result of proceedings taken for the purpose of punishing the parties believed to have been the instruments of inflicting death upon recusant members, or the indirect result of the feelings of anger and dislike produced by these deaths, and exasperated by the failure of the measures taken to bring the suspected parties to justice. The former is partially suggested by the circumstance that it was one of the new officers who is described as the victim; for, if an agent for the distribution, he might also be an agent for the collection, of the funds of the society, and thus obnoxious to the suspicion of active complicity in the penal measures: but this is, after all, but a slight ground of inference. And the account given of the proceedings, and of the causes which produced the accusation against Stephen, implies a total change in the feelings with which the society and the populace mutually regarded each other, which rather suggests the latter. Stephen disputes with those of the synagogues of the Libertines, and with men of Cyrene and Alexandria and Cilicia and Asia. But these are the very same as the men who had listened to the speech of Peter on the occasion of the miraculous display of the gift of tongues, and had been converted by thousands; and whose conversion, so far from exciting popular hostility, had been accompanied by the goodwill of the people. And that which he taught must have been in substance identical with that which had been before taught by Peter—the resurrection and Messiahship of Jesus. But, apparently, in how different a spirit! It is true that we have no account of the arguments he employs in these disputations; but we may gather what the writer under-



stood to be its tone and temper by the speech which he is reported to have delivered before the tribunal assembled for his trial. Peter, under the direct immediate impulse of the Spirit, at that very instant poured out upon him, while telling the people that they had denied the holy and the just One, and had desired a murderer to be given to them, excuses both them and their rulers on the ground that they had done it ignorantly; and he speaks throughout as though he were assured of the favourable disposition of his audience. Stephen, on the contrary, denounces the Council and the people as stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart, admits of no excuse for their conduct, and obviously despairs of obtaining not merely a friendly, but even an impartial hearing. We do not, of course, regard either of these speeches as historical; but obviously they are such as the author deemed suitable to the position of the speaker and to the light in which the Church was regarded by the multitude. It is clear, therefore, that in his view, which was probably derived from documents preserved in the Church, something must have occurred in the interval between the two speeches to render the society unpopular; and, as there had been no change in their doctrines, we must seek the cause of their unpopularity in another direction. One such cause obviously might be the secret crimes imputed to them, of which the reported deaths of Ananias and Sapphira were a type. That it was the society, and not merely the individual, that had become unpopular, is conclusively shown by the description of the measures adopted to break it up, which led, we are told, to the dispersion of all the brethren except the Apostles.

It would indeed be difficult to mark more strongly than has been done by the author, the change that had taken place in the feelings of the populace to the new sect. The time has gone by when the disciples had favour with all the people, and when officers sent to arrest the more prominent members took them without violence, because they feared lest they should have been stoned by the bystanders. Stephen is arrested, but no voice is

raised in his defence, and when in his speech before the Sanhedrim he repeats in substance discourses which had in the mouth of Peter produced such marvellous effects in winning converts to Christ, the result is to exasperate the hearers to a pitch which leads them to anticipate the tardy progress of the law and to put him to death by stoning. And afterwards Paul is represented as dragging numbers to prison whom no angel releases, without any popular sympathy being excited in their behalf. So far from this, indeed, the entire body is driven to flight, with the sole exception of the Apostles.<sup>1</sup> The individuals are the same, their hopes and their doctrines are unchanged, but they are now as detested as they were formerly popular. And our doubt of the accuracy of the details need not affect our confidence in the substantial truth of the broad general outline of the story.

Modern commentators are accustomed to give another turn to these occurrences, and to represent Stephen as a sort of precursor of Paul; the cause of his unpopularity having been the liberality of his doctrines and his elevation above the narrow standpoint of his brethren; or, from another point of view, his exceptional zeal and ability in the enunciation of doctrines which all indeed held, but which he forced upon the unconvinced and unwilling. This latter view, however, while it may account for his individual unpopularity, fails to account for that of the society; and the former has no support whatever in the narrative. It is true that his speech before the Council, by dint of skilful manipulation, may be made to exhibit hostility to the Law and the Temple; but this feeling does not appear upon the surface so as to be seized by the audience, nor is it so manifested as to lead the more clear-sighted, who might be supposed to recognize its existence, to any such outburst as is described. And we can scarcely suppose that the writer, who has taken care to clear Stephen from the charge made against him by stating that it was sup-

<sup>1</sup> This reputed stay of the Apostles in Jerusalem is highly improbable in itself, and is at variance with the tradition represented in the Clementine Recognitions. It is possibly due to the exigencies of the story of preaching the Gospel to the Samaritans.

ported by false witnesses, would have intentionally represented him as speaking in a manner which implicitly admitted its truth. Having to account for the change of feeling towards the brotherhood, the execution of the leading deacon, and the complete success of the measures directed against the society, he does this by introducing Stephen as provoking hostility by his skilful argumentation, which his opponents were unable to answer, and therefore silence by violence; but even then he is careful to show that the arguments contained nothing to justify the charge made against him. And when this is the case, we, seeing the inadequacy of the alleged cause to produce the results described, are necessarily driven to seek the true causes elsewhere.

These causes we have endeavoured to indicate, and at least they must be allowed to have some weight; for while we can understand that the promise of the immediate restoration of the kingdom to Israel under the sovereignty of the risen Jesus, who would appear in the clouds of heaven for the purpose, and an invitation to join a new society founded upon this hope, might win numerous adherents from the poorer, and some also from the more wealthy classes, and make all willing to "sell all they had and give to the poor;" we can see that a delay in the promised appearance might gradually cool the first enthusiasm, and render the continuance of the sacrifices which the society exacted from its members an intolerable burthen. We can understand also that the adoption of severe measures against recusant members might not only alienate friends, but when rumoured abroad might aggravate the disrepute into which the society had fallen, by reason of the proved fallaciousness of its fundamental assumption. And it would be natural that a consciousness of this failing popularity, aided by a conviction, felt though unacknowledged, of the apparent force of the circumstances to which it was due, might sharpen the zeal of the more enthusiastic members, and make them more aggressive and more acrimonious in their proceedings; thus aggravating and intensifying the popular dislike. It is no unexampled occurrence

that the time in which the fortunes of a community are apparently most desperate, should be also the time in which its members are most uncompromising and defiant. Under these circumstances, the rulers, who had always regarded the society with distrust, might feel that the period had arrived for the adoption of measures for its suppression, which they might carry out with, for the time, complete success. And the view we have thus taken would not be affected if we were to suppose, with orthodox commentators, that the offence of Ananias was not an attempt to escape an obligation which the laws of the society imposed, but a mere lie of vanity—a false statement made for the purpose of enhancing the merit of the sacrifice he was consummating; for this would make the miracle, or murder, more purposeless, and therefore only deepen the popular indignation when the true circumstances became known.

With this dispersion terminates the first stage in the history of the infant Church, during which it was exclusively Jewish, and apparently—obviously we might say—communistic and millenarian. When we find it again settled in Jerusalem, it is differently organized, and has begun to include Gentiles within the scope of its agencies. It is to this first period that we may refer many of the sayings attributed to Jesus—notably that to the rich young man.<sup>1</sup> Doubtless many of that class were attracted by the hopes held out by the Apostles, who nevertheless shrank from joining a society which exacted from its members a surrender of all they had, for the common benefit. Such would be held out as examples of the impossibility that a rich man could enter into the kingdom of heaven, and therefore of the necessity that every candidate for admission should strip himself of his wealth in the first instance, that so there might be nothing to distract his affections, and he might exchange his earthly and corruptible riches for a share in the incorruptible treasures of heaven. The

<sup>1</sup> Probably also that preserved by Irenæus, and which he professes to have derived through John, with regard to the giant grapes of Paradise.—Iren. Adv. Hær. B. v. c. xxxiii. s. 3.

period was one of intense enthusiasm and eager hope, one in which no sacrifice could be too great in prospect of the coming prize; but it was marred by violence, and it resulted in disillusion. It was one of those times of which history records so many, and of which almost every one in his individual experience has had at least a glimpse, in which the assured anticipation of some supreme good fills the soul and raises it for the time into a region in which all doubts and difficulties vanish, and the warnings of experience are unheard or unheeded. The return of the Jews from Babylon, the first preaching of Jesus in Galilee, the dawn of the Reformation, the early days of the French Revolution,<sup>1</sup> as well as these first days of waiting for the coming of the Son of Man,—the beginnings indeed of every movement which has sought in the name of Truth and Justice, or of God, or of Christ, to redress the inequalities and to terminate the wrongs and sufferings of which the world is full,—have all awakened similar hopes; and all have alike failed in face of the obstacles presented by the conditions of humanity. And we may fear are all alike doomed to fail. Not that hope is forbidden, or that effort is useless, but that progress is inevitably slow and intermittent; and that any attempt to accelerate its course, whatever good is attained, may be expected to bring with it some corresponding, though perhaps not always counterbalancing, evil.

But not one of these has found a chronicler to depict the feelings, aspirations, and conduct of the society, in language as simple, yet effective, as that of the author of the Acts. "They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers; and all that believed were together, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had need. And they, continuing daily in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favour with the people." "And the multitude of

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth—I cite from memory—"Twas bliss to be alive, but to be young was very heaven."



them that believed were of one heart and soul; neither said any of them that any of the things that he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. Neither was there any among them that lacked, for as many as were possessed of lands and houses sold them, and brought the price of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the Apostles' feet, and distribution was made to every man according as he had need."<sup>1</sup> But it was not in human nature that such a state of feeling should be permanent. The more intense the strain, the more inevitable was the reaction; the more vivid the hope, the more wearying the delay; and the more unreserved the sacrifice, the deeper the disappointment when it was found to have been made in vain. And the system contained within itself the seeds of its own destruction, if its fundamental assumption were not speedily realized. Every new member whose possessions were thrown into the common stock, became an additional burthen upon the resources of the society when his individual contribution was exhausted, and every month's delay must diminish the enthusiasm that swelled its numbers. Supernatural gifts, or what passed for such, might for a time uphold the faith of the members and attract recruits from without; the simplicity of manners among the brethren, and their frugal mode of life, would husband the funds; but the steady pressure exerted by the necessity of providing for the subsistence of the community, would in the end prove too great to be borne by voluntary efforts, and measures of compulsion would be needed if the society were to be preserved from dissolution. Such measures, however, could not long avert, and they might even precipitate the conclusion.

But though the system might break down, the faith that had inspired it still subsisted. The unexpected delay in the coming of Jesus, which had caused its failure, might have convinced the Apostles and brethren that they were mistaken in their interpretation of his prediction as to the time of his return, but, obviously, did not shake their belief in its truth. Nevertheless,

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 42 ff., iv. 32 ff.

it would be clear that if its fulfilment were not to be immediate, there must be a change in the organization of the Church corresponding to its altered position. Prayer and communion could no longer be the only things needful, and trust in God would require to be supplemented by their own exertions. New converts would be permitted to retain their possessions, and only expected to contribute out of their superfluity to the necessities of those who were unable to labour, or whose earnings did not suffice to maintain them. And, probably, agencies would be organized for the diffusion of the faith, since it appeared that time would be allowed for the purpose. Such seems to have been the condition of the Church during the second period of its history, upon a consideration of which we are about to enter.

## CHAPTER II.

### RETURN OF CHURCH TO JERUSALEM.

Difficulties connected with stay of Apostles in Jerusalem—Changes in constitution of Church—Presbyters—No longer communistic—Preaching to Gentiles—Mission to Samaria—Doubts suggested by story—Simon of Gitta—Double character assigned to him in Christian legend—Sometimes a pretender to divinity—Sometimes a pseudonym of Paul—Possible allusions to Paul in legend—Probably two legends ultimately blended—Motive for insertion of incident—Conversion of Cornelius—Unhistorical character of incidents—Possible foundation in Peter having first baptized a Gentile who was not circumcised—Preaching to Gentiles—A recognized duty of Jews—Equally so with new sect—Probable extent of—Church of Antioch—A type of what was occurring in many places—Friendly action of Church of Jerusalem—Position of Gentile members—Admission—Privileges—Baptism necessary to salvation—Persecution by Herod—Probably result of denial of his kingship—Religious opinions of disciples at Jerusalem orthodox and furnishing no ground for persecution.

WITH the re-establishment of the Church in Jerusalem after the first dispersion, we enter upon a new period in its history, distinguished according to the Acts by two events which had a marked influence upon its history—the conversion of Paul, and the admission of Gentiles to full membership by the administration of the rite of baptism. We read also of a mission to the Samaritans and of a fresh persecution by Herod; and we obtain the first glimpse of contributions by Gentile converts to the support of the brethren in Jerusalem. Here, however, perhaps even more than in the former portion of the work, our materials are open to suspicion, and it is only uncertainly and with much difficulty that we can lay hold of any incidents upon which we are able to rely; though here also it may be possible to form a tolerably correct conception of the general course of events, and of the changes that were occurring in the views and position of

the Church itself. We may take this period as extending, so far as the general history of the Church is concerned, down to the holding of the first Council at Jerusalem, excluding from our present investigation that portion which relates to the conversion and mission of the Apostle Paul.

We are not told, and we can scarcely conjecture, how the Apostles could be able, if indeed they were able, to save themselves from the measures adopted to break up the society, so that they, although its known and recognized heads, remained in peace in Jerusalem, while their followers were compelled to flee in all directions. Nor, on the other hand, if they were involved in the persecution, as would be antecedently probable, and as is stated in what we may believe to represent an early tradition,<sup>1</sup> do we know how they were enabled to return to the city and re-organize the church. But we may suppose that it would be found impossible to obtain any proof of their complicity in the acts charged against them if the proceedings were judicial, while if they were political they would be suspended when the original organization was broken up; so that in either case the Apostles might after a time return in safety, having learned by their past experience a lesson of much value for the future management of the sect. Thenceforth, with the single exception of the repressive measures taken by Herod, they appear to have lived in Jerusalem, having favour with the people and without provoking the active hostility of the Government, for a period of, probably, from twenty to twenty-five years, when James the brother of Jesus was put to death by order of Ananus the high-priest for the time.

We learn nothing directly from the Acts as to the internal history of the church during this period, but we can collect that important changes were introduced. In the former period, as we have seen, there were only two orders of officers, the Apostles and the deacons. In this second period we hear nothing of the latter, though we can scarcely doubt that they formed a perma-

<sup>1</sup> Clem. Recog. B. i. c. 71.

ment institution ; but we find the ruling body to consist of the Apostles and presbyters, the latter of whom appear to represent the society and to act in its name ; and at their head, apparently, James the brother of Jesus, who according to the received view was not one of the Apostles. In addition to this we find no hint of any community of goods, or of any obligation on the part of individual members to strip themselves of their possessions. This latter circumstance argues an essential change in the constitution of the society, corresponding, we may believe, to an alteration in the view of the time of the coming of the Lord, and, possibly, to the adoption of means for preaching the good news of the kingdom beyond the limits of Palestine. During the first period, the government of the church appears to have been essentially democratic. The Apostles no doubt were its recognized leaders, but all matters affecting the body seem to have been discussed at meetings of the members ; and there is no hint of any distinction of office or position among these latter. The inconveniences that might be expected to result from this want of organization would be only partially remedied by the appointment of deacons, whose functions were limited to the one purpose of superintending the distribution of the common funds. Such a system might be tolerated while the whole society was animated by a belief that Christ might appear at any moment to establish his kingdom, but it would be recognized as insufficient so soon as it was understood that this appearance certainly would not be immediate, and might be postponed for years. For then it behoved all, not merely to be prepared for his arrival whenever it might occur, but in the mean time to be faithful stewards of whatever had been entrusted to them, and to provide for the orderly government of the society.

It is difficult not to connect these changes with the presence of James, whose real position is, however, one of the standing enigmas of early Church history. Whether he was a brother of Jesus, who joined the society after his death, or whether he was that one of the Apostles known to ecclesiastical writers as James



the Less, who came to the front in times of difficulty by virtue of his commanding qualities and his faculty of organization, it seems clear that his position in the Church, at least from the time of the Council at Jerusalem to Paul's last visit there, and very probably from the time of its re-assembling in the city, was substantially that of head or bishop. But this only makes his history the more enigmatical. If he were not an original Apostle, under what circumstances did he join the society, and what were his inducements, and how did he achieve his position as leader? And if he were the Apostle, how does it happen that in the Gospels he is never mentioned by that title which we see from Paul and from the Clementines and Eusebius was uniformly conceded to him, "the brother of the Lord"? How is it, we may ask, that this title is never referred to in the Acts, and that in every one of the Gospels there should be passages which assert or imply that all the brothers of Jesus disbelieved in his pretensions, without making any exception of James? This last circumstance, indeed, appears doubly enigmatical, since we have found "the brothers of the Lord" and his mother associated with the Apostles in the very earliest days of the Church, and that the former continued to hold a recognized position by the side of the Apostles, and apparently upon a footing of equality with them.<sup>1</sup> In the list of appearances of Jesus after his resurrection given by Paul to the disciples at Corinth, there is one to James individually. We cannot, therefore, doubt its being a received belief in the society; and that it survived as a tradition is shown by a fragment of the lost Gospel of the Hebrews preserved in the writings of Jerome,<sup>2</sup> where he is represented as having vowed that he would not eat bread from the time of the Last Supper until after Jesus had risen, and Jesus appears to him immediately on his rising, and breaks the bread to him that he may eat. How, then, does it happen that there is no reference to the cir-

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 14; 1 Cor. ix. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Jerome, *Catol. Script. Eccl. B. ii.*, cited in Nicolas' *Études sur les Évangiles Apocryphes*.

cumstance in any of the Gospels, or in the Acts? It is possible that there might have been two influences at work to cause the obscurity in which his name and position are shrouded; the one that, when the separation between the descendants of the church of Jerusalem and the orthodox Gentile churches was complete, the circumstance that Jesus was specially claimed by the former, and that their traditions presented him under a purely Jewish and legal aspect, led to his being regarded with some degree of repugnance by the latter, through whom the Gospels and Acts have reached us; and that this induced a suppression of the part he had taken in the formation of the church, and to a concealment of his true relation to Jesus. Or from this point of view it might be only that the brothers of the Lord and their descendants were identified with the heterodox Ebionites, and that accordingly the legend was modified for the purpose of presenting them as opposing him in his lifetime as they did subsequently oppose the true Church; while James was excepted from this charge by keeping his relationship to Jesus out of sight. And beside this there would be the feeling that the exceptional character of the miraculous conception might be lowered, and its reality contested, if it were understood that Mary had children by her husband after the birth of Jesus, and hence there might be an alteration in the designation of the second James in the list of the Apostles in order to remove this evidence of the fact.

It is impossible to say to what extent these motives might operate, but there can be little doubt that both existed. The latter has been at work ever since we are able to trace the history of the Church outside of the canon, and we can have no security that it has not affected the canon itself. And that the traditions of the Jewish or Judaizing portion of the Church did represent James under the aspect we have suggested, is shown by the passage from Hegesippus, quoted by Eusebius,<sup>1</sup> in which he is described as consecrated from his birth; abstaining not only from wine and fermented liquors, but also from animal food;

<sup>1</sup> H. E., B. ii. c. 23.

never using a razor, nor anointing himself, nor entering a bath; wearing no woollen, but only linen garments; permitted to enter the sanctuary, and there spending so much time in kneeling and prayer that his knees became as hard as camels'; and, by reason of his exemplary piety, known throughout all Jerusalem as the Just, and the rampart or protection of the people. This description is quoted with complacency by Eusebius two centuries after it was written; but at the time it would be rather likely to repel those who, in the middle of the second century, were every day separating themselves more widely from Jewish observances, and asserting their independence of the representatives of the original church at Jerusalem. We cannot say if the picture drawn by Hegesippus is in any degree trustworthy. Most probably it merely represents in an ideal form the tendencies of the party at the time, embodied in the person of the traditional first Bishop of the Church. It is not unfrequently the case that the characters of men suffer more from the inventions of injudicious admirers than even from the attacks of enemies; and it is scarcely fair to ask us to judge unfavourably of the conduct of James in administering the affairs of the church of Jerusalem, because of the legendary attributes with which he is invested in a writing composed nearly a century after his death.<sup>1</sup> Certainly nothing in the writings of Paul himself warrants us in supposing his character to have been such as Hegesippus describes.

In the Acts of the Apostles, James is not introduced until the occasion of the Council at Jerusalem,<sup>2</sup> and then, as we have said, he is not mentioned by his distinctive title. But we see by the passage already referred to in the Epistle to the Galatians, that he was at Jerusalem on the occasion of Paul's first visit after his conversion, and therefore presumably three years after the first dispersion; and we see also that he is so mentioned as to imply an influential position in the Church. He is referred to also in the description given of the release of Peter from prison, in terms

<sup>1</sup> See Renan, *Saint Paul*, p. 286.

<sup>2</sup> Unless he is the James of Alphæus mentioned in the list of the Apostles, Acts i. 13.

suggesting that he was even then regarded as leader—a position which he apparently continued to occupy until his death. May we not therefore suppose that the new organization of the society was mainly his work? Certainly he appears to be its real president during the period in which that organization was fixed, and during the period also in which Christ was first preached to the Gentiles, and in which the first Gentile churches were founded. It would consequently be unreasonable to suppose, without stronger evidence than we possess, that these new activities, so widely spread and so fruitful, were resisted by him, or that he regarded them with disfavour. Ordinarily and naturally a leader is credited with the success of the movement over which he presides; and this, it would seem, ought to be the case here. The chief reason why it has not been so appears to be, a misapprehension as to the effect of one or two expressions of Paul, taken in connection with the silence of the writer of the Acts upon all subjects which lay outside of his immediate purpose. And beside this, there has been a disposition on the one hand to exaggerate the share of Paul in the early activities of the Church, and on the other a disposition to regard James too exclusively in the light in which he is presented in the Ebionitish legend related by Hegeppus,—a legend, however, which is entitled to no more authority than the corresponding legends of that party with regard to Jesus himself, which, so far as they have been preserved, have been rejected by almost all critics.

We suppose, therefore, that after the Church had returned to Jerusalem and was established there, changes were effected in its organization, especially in two points. First, the removal of all obligation on the part of converts to devote their possessions to the purposes of the society, and, corresponding with this, the duty imposed upon all as far as possible to support themselves by their labour; and second, the formation of agencies for the diffusion of the faith outside of Palestine,—at first perhaps solely among Jews and proselytes, but afterwards by seeking to gain proselytes to the Church from among Gentiles who had no pre-

vious relation to the Law. We suppose, too, that at the same time the government of the Church was administered by presbyters as well as by the Apostles, the presbyters (possibly) being chosen by the members, acting with the Apostles when they were present, and supplying their place as a council of government when they might be absent. And as James is seemingly presented to us as the head of the Church when these changes are effected, it is natural to attribute to him at least a principal share in effecting them.

It is evident that both of these changes were connected with a modification of the belief of the disciples as to the time of the second coming. They had gone over all the cities of Judah, but the Son of Man had not yet been manifested. Either, therefore, they had misunderstood the words of Jesus, or these words bore a different meaning from that which they had at first supposed. There was time, consequently, and motive for spreading the glad tidings, and there was need also for finding some other means for the support of the brethren than those which had maintained them in idleness and devotion during the early days. Their own labour, indeed, might not always suffice for their maintenance, especially in the case of those wealthier members who in their first enthusiasm had sold their possessions and had laid down the price at the Apostles' feet; so that contributions from foreign churches might form a welcome addition to the funds available for the purpose. And the establishment of such churches might be a natural result of the success that attended the preaching of those who were scattered abroad on the occasion of the persecution. But it is not likely that this was the first time the word had been preached in other countries; unless we are to suppose that every one who attached himself to the society during the first period was so possessed by the belief in the immediate second coming of Jesus as to continue to reside in Jerusalem, not thinking it worth while even to re-visit his home; and this could scarcely have been the case unless the duration of that period was very much shorter than we have supposed. If any of the



brethren had returned to their homes, or had even left Judæa, it would be a matter of course that they should seek to make their family and friends, and possibly their acquaintance also, partakers in their new hopes. Still it may be that, in the excitement of the moment and in view of the shortness of the time, little or no importance was attached to such preaching, and that it was not until the Church was re-settled in an attitude of patient waiting that methodical arrangements were adopted for the purpose. But these might be stimulated or even suggested by the readiness with which the new hopes had been accepted by those to whom they had been already proclaimed.

So far we appear justified in our conclusions. When, however, we turn from these general considerations to the details of the special activities of the Church described in the Acts, we feel how unreliable are our materials. How, for instance, are we to accept the account of the preaching of the Gospel in Samaria; considering the feelings of aversion with which the Jews and the Samaritans mutually regarded each other? It may, indeed, be suggested that fugitives from Judæa, driven thence by the authorities for conduct or for doctrines affecting the safety of the State, or the exclusive claims of the national religion, would be likely to find a refuge and a welcome among the Samaritans, and might thus obtain a favourable hearing for their preaching; proved to be anti-judaical by the opposition it had excited among the Jews. And this would no doubt diminish the improbability of the story so far as the conduct of the Samaritans is concerned. But it appears impossible that those who are represented a short time afterwards as taking exception to Peter's eating with converted Gentiles should have acquiesced in the reception of Samaritans into the Church upon equal terms with themselves; for the Samaritans could not even be admitted as proselytes, and to eat with them, although they were circumcised, was equivalent to eating the flesh of the swine. That friendly Gentiles should be admitted, not to the full privileges of the body, but to a modified fellowship, was only natural; for they might be ad-

mitted in the same manner to an incomplete participation in the Jewish rites and hopes. Even this, however, was not permitted with regard to the Samaritans, who were under an absolute and irremovable sentence of exclusion.<sup>1</sup> It would, therefore, be in the very highest degree improbable that men who, up to that moment, had been so eminently and exclusively Jewish in their beliefs and practices, should have turned to Samaria when the whole Gentile world was before them, in every part of which they would find men of their own race and creed to whom to address themselves; and impossible that they should have admitted Samaritans into the society without provoking some protest. And there would be no meaning in the alleged limitation of their field of labour by those who were scattered abroad, who preached the word to none but Jews only, if Philip had at once preached the word in Samaria, and if the two chief Apostles, with the unanimous approval of the members of the church in Jerusalem, had sanctioned and confirmed his teaching.

It does not in any degree diminish this difficulty that we are told that the whole church was dispersed throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria except the Apostles, and that it was the Apostles by whom Peter and John were delegated; for there is nothing in the early history of the church to suggest that they were at this time more liberally disposed towards either Gentiles or Samaritans than the body of the disciples. Nor is anything related that tends to lessen the apparent improbability. There is no divine vision indicating that in this case the ban of exclusion might be removed, and no previous outpouring of the Holy Ghost to show that upon these outcasts God had conferred the essential fruits of membership, and thus to justify the mere

<sup>1</sup> Grimm. *Die Samarit.* pp. 109, 110, cited in Pressensé's *Early Years of Christianity*. It appears (Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, art. Samaritan Pentateuch) that there were alternations of feeling on this subject, and that some of the more liberal of the doctors were disposed to extend charity and tolerance even to this despised race. Such effusions of individual liberality would not affect in any way the feelings of the populace, any more than the liberal utterances of men like Montalembert affected the feeling of the Romanist priesthood and populace towards Protestants.

formal act of admission ; both of which we are told were required in the case of a devout Gentile before Peter could venture to baptize him. On the contrary, the story appears to proceed upon the supposition that there was no obstacle to intercourse with Samaritans or to their reception into the church. One of the deacons takes upon himself to preach Jesus to them and to admit converts by baptism, and the Holy Ghost is conferred by the laying on of hands by Peter and John after the church has been founded. We may say, therefore, either that the account given in the Acts of the beliefs and practices of the first disciples, and of their conduct in the case of Cornelius and of the converts at Antioch, is altogether unreliable, or that the whole Samaritan episode is an invention of the writer, foisted into its place for apologetic reasons, but having no historical basis. And the latter is undoubtedly the conclusion which is forced upon us, since it would seem from the Epistles of Paul that the author of the Acts, so far from exaggerating, has even understated the dissensions arising in the Church in consequence of the admission of Gentiles.

This conclusion is strengthened by the obvious manner in which the whole story is made to subserve the author's object. We have already called attention to the bearing of the incident upon the questions subsequently agitated in the Church in connection with the conduct of Paul, and how the action of Philip in preaching to these Samaritans, without any previous authorization, would form a precedent and justification for that of Paul in preaching to the Gentiles after the previous sanction of the Apostles had been withdrawn ; but this, though it accounts for the introduction of the incident, would not of itself authorize its rejection. Still it shows that an adequate motive might exist for the invention of such a story, and therefore leaves the arguments against its real occurrence, founded upon its intrinsic improbability, without any countervailing considerations. But in addition to the reason already assigned for its insertion, or invention, another may be found in the character of Simon of

Gitta and the conduct attributed to him. It is obvious that one main object of the story is to introduce him and to bring him into contact with Peter and John. And this having been done, the mission to Samaria and its results drop altogether out of the story. We learn nothing more of the church in Samaria or of its members, any more than of any opposition or protest, either then or at any subsequent time, on the part of the church of Jerusalem or of the Jews. Nor is there any notice in the writings of the early Fathers of the existence of such a church.<sup>1</sup>

Simon of Gitta, or Simon the Magician, was a well-known name in early Christian literature—sometimes representing a Samaritan pretender who assumed a divine or half-divine character and taught some Gnostic doctrines, founding a sect which subsisted for many years and was widely diffused—and sometimes representing the Apostle Paul, in his individual character, and as the type of the lawless tendencies of the early Gentile converts; and in both of these characters he is shown in conflict with Peter, the representative of the doctrine and authority of the Church. Of Simon the Samaritan we know scarcely anything. Justin Martyr, who was himself a Samaritan, does refer to him, but is apparently ignorant of his meeting with Peter in Samaria, or of his acceptance of baptism from Philip.<sup>2</sup> So far from this, he describes most of the Samaritans as believing in him as a god, which could scarcely have been the case if they had seen him so plainly recognize the superiority of the Christian faith. Justin further describes him as a man who by the aid of devils did such mighty works in Rome that he was regarded as a god, and as a god had a statue erected to him in that city, bearing the inscription, “*Simoni Deo Sancto.*”<sup>3</sup> In the Refutation of Heresies by

<sup>1</sup> Excepting of course those who cite from the Acts.

<sup>2</sup> Justin, *Apol.* c. xxvi. Justin knows nothing apparently of any Christians in Samaria, either then or previously.

<sup>3</sup> The Rev. Marcus Dods, M.A., the translator of the works of Justin in Clark's *Ante-Nicene Library*, and the Rev. W. L. Bevan, one of the contributors to *Smith's Dictionary of the Bible* (and, we presume, the Rev. Dr. E. Burton, the Bampton Lecturer), apparently believe this story, although it is almost demonstrably proved to

Hippolytus, there is an elaborate but not very intelligible account of his system; coupled with a description of the immoral practices of himself and his disciples, resembling in many respects the charges made by Pagan and Jewish writers against the Christians themselves, and entitled to no more credit. It only shows the strong theological animosity excited among Christians of the third century by a rival sect, whose tenets had many points of contact with their own. He is also mentioned by Irenæus, who, however, founds himself upon the account in the Acts, representing his opposition to Christianity to have been the result of the refusal of Peter to endow him with the power of conferring the miraculous gifts imparted by the laying on of the Apostles' hands. And Epiphanius introduces him in a similar character.

But it is in the Clementine Homilies and Recognitions that he assumes the greatest importance, and there he is, next to Peter, the principal character. His doctrines in these works are

be false by the discovery of the base of a statue in the locality indicated by Justin, bearing the inscription "Semoni Deo Sancto," showing it to have been erected to the Sabine deity Semo Sancus. The arguments by which Mr. Bevan vindicates his opinions, viz. that the inscription on the base of the statue contained words inconsistent with the assertion of Justin which should have shown him that he was wrong, might have some force if Justin were accustomed to weigh his statements and to examine the basis upon which they rested, instead of being, as he is, illogical in his reasonings and reckless to the last degree in his assertions. And with regard to the supposed corroboration by Tertullian and Irenæus, can any one who has read their writings suppose that they ever troubled themselves to test the truth of any story which in their view redounded to the credit of the Church or to the discredit of its opponents? These gentlemen must therefore believe in the possession of magical powers by Simon, and that their manifestation so impressed the people of Rome and their rulers as to lead to the erection of a public statue to him as a god. As though it were not infinitely more probable that a man who can mistake Menes for Moses, as Justin does, and who throughout all his writings shows himself to be utterly destitute of any critical faculty, should mistake two letters in an inscription and overlook the rest, than that the Roman Emperor or the Roman Senate should decree divine honours to a Syrian impostor and even erect a statue to him as a divinity. And it must be remembered that neither Hippolytus, who lived at Rome, nor the author of the Apostolical Constitutions, knows anything of the alleged fact, and that they both implicitly contradict it—the one by describing Simon as publicly vanquished by Peter in his crowning assumption of the Divine character, and the other by describing him as directing himself to be buried alive, promising on the third day to rise from his tomb, but continuing to remain there. One could scarcely have expected that an exploded absurdity like this should re-appear under such sanctions.



analogous to those described by Hippolytus, and he is made to claim the character of the self-subsisting Being, which claim he vindicates by his magical powers; but he is represented as profoundly immoral in conduct, and as consorting with a prostitute whom he had purchased as a slave in Tyre,<sup>1</sup> and whom, under the name of Helena or Luna, he declared to be the universal Mother; while, mixed with these, he is somewhat incongruously invested with characteristics that unmistakably identify him with the Apostle Paul. In both of these characters he is represented as the especial opponent of Peter, by whom, however, he is uniformly refuted and put to silence, until, despairing of success, he flies from the contest. In the Apostolical Constitutions the legend in the Clementines is carried out further. Peter, we are told, followed Simon to Rome, to which place he had fled, and where his sorceries had won for him numerous adherents in the Church itself as well as among the heathen, and he there publicly exposed the falseness of his pretensions, causing him to fall bleeding and shattered to the ground from the elevation in the air to which he had been raised by the demons whom he commanded. And in addition to this, we are told that Simon and his disciple Cleobius and their followers had compiled poisonous books under the name of Christ and his disciples.<sup>2</sup>

In these scattered and inconsistent notices it is difficult to discover any reliable data. There can be no doubt, however, that Paul is intended to be referred to in many passages in the Clementines under the name of Simon. The conflict with Peter, though the scene is changed—the attempt on Simon's part to claim superiority because he had known the words of Jesus in a vision, and Peter's triumphant refutation—the reference by

<sup>1</sup> In the Homilies, indeed (Hom. ii. 22, 23), he is described as having been originally a disciple of John the Baptist, and as having visited Alexandria, where he acquired great learning; a description which appears to glance at Apollos, who was an Alexandrian, mighty in the Scriptures, and knowing only the baptism of John. And the name of Apollos, as well as that of Paul, was used at Corinth as the watchword of a party opposed to that of Peter. Helena also is there represented as having been a disciple of John.

<sup>2</sup> Clem.

Peter to his having been accused and reviled by Simon, and described as "having been to blame"<sup>1</sup> because he had stated what he had heard with his own ears from the Lord, point unmistakably to Paul. There is nothing in the Acts or in any independent notices of Simon to suggest that he claimed to have had any revelation from Jesus, whether in a vision or otherwise; while this was emphatically the foundation of Paul's claim to be received as a teacher. In this case we must ask whether the incident of Simon leading Helena about with him might not be due to the circumstances, whatever they were, that caused Paul to ask whether he might not lead about with him "a woman being a sister," as well as Peter or the other Apostles or the brothers of the Lord;<sup>2</sup> and to address one of the sisters of the church of Philippi as his true yokefellow.<sup>3</sup> The former of these expressions was understood by Clement of Alexandria (quoted by Eusebius) and by Eusebius himself to imply that Paul was married;<sup>4</sup> but considering what he says of himself,<sup>5</sup> it may be more probably referred to some unmarried sister who devoted herself to his service, and who, possibly, sometimes accompanied him on his journeys. Such a practice, however pure the relation might be, could scarcely fail in the mouth of his opponents to be represented in a derogatory light, and might easily serve as the basis of such a legend as that we are considering. But while the passages to which we have referred point unmistakably to Paul, there are many others which apparently must refer to another. In the Recognitions, for instance,<sup>6</sup> Paul is described as an enemy, who, on the occasion of a public disputation in which all the Apostles took part, excited a tumult that led to their being driven from the city; and who afterwards obtained letters

<sup>1</sup> Comp. Gal. ii. 11, where the very word is applied by Paul to Peter.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 5. Why should Paul ask this question unless such had been his occasional practice?

<sup>3</sup> Philip. iv. 3. The word used ordinarily implies the conjugal relation.

<sup>4</sup> Euseb. H. E., B. iii. c. 30.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 7. May not this cover a tacit denial of charges made against him?

<sup>6</sup> Recog. B. i. c. 70, 71.

from the high-priest to Damascus in the hope of being able by their means to effect the arrest of Peter; and then Simon is shortly afterwards introduced separately and in a manner which almost excludes the possibility of their identification.

It is not easy to explain or reconcile these contradictions. If it were not for Justin, we might suppose that Simon was a mythical personage, representing in a concrete form two separate manifestations of a general tendency; but his reference to the subject renders this improbable, since he was not only a native of Samaria, but he does not know Simon in the character assigned to him in the Christian legend. Simon, with him, is not the opponent of Peter, but a rival of Christ; worshipped by the Samaritans as Christ was by the Christians. We are therefore disposed to conjecture that there were two separate legends, one of which represented Peter as encountering and refuting in Simon the Gnostic tendencies which probably even from the first threatened to alloy the doctrines taught by the Apostles—and the other as combating in Paul the spirit of revolt against ecclesiastical authority, and the tendency to set up individual opinion, whether founded on the deductions of reason, or on visions and revelations, against the authority of the Apostles or the Church. In this case it is quite possible that in the latter legend, Paul, who had undoubtedly a large following in some of the churches whom it might be impolitic to offend needlessly, may have been described by some pseudonym, perhaps Simon; and it might easily happen that this identity of name subsequently led to the blending of the two legends.

It should be borne in mind that from the orthodox, or perhaps we should say ecclesiastical, standpoint, there was a half-agreement between the several positions of the two; for the sort of Gnosticism that Simon is described as teaching was the revolt of reason against authority; not accepting the dogmas of the Church as a final basis of faith, but attempting to discover some independent grounds of belief, or at least some intelligible explanation of the doctrines propounded for acceptance, or of the mystery

of the existence of evil. And Paul represented the revolt of the individual reason and conscience against the same authority. And his reasonings often contain concessions to Gnosticism, which may perhaps arise from his more nearly sharing those opinions than we are disposed to believe. It is by no means impossible that, if we possessed the whole of Paul's writings, or had an authentic report of his teaching among his Gentile converts, especially those who had knowledge,<sup>1</sup> or when he was speaking secret wisdom to those who were fully initiated,<sup>2</sup> we might be able to see that much which in our present ignorance appears to have no possible relation to his doctrines, was in reality directed against them. Not, indeed, that they were such as they are represented to be, but such as might be made to assume that form, under the influence of party feeling and to suit the purposes of controversy. We may reasonably doubt whether Simon, supposing there to have been such a person, or any heretic contemporary with Peter, really pretended to possess magical powers of the kind attributed to him;<sup>3</sup> or whether he claimed to have been the Son in Jerusalem, and the Father in Samaria, and the Holy Ghost in Gentile lands; or whether he was accompanied by a concubine whom he had purchased in the markets of Tyre, but whom he represented to be the Mother of all things; or whether his doctrines as taught by himself were quite as absurd and irrational as they are depicted. If we had any of the writings attributed by the Apostolical Constitutions to himself or Cleobius in their original form, we might be unable to recognize many or most of the doctrines imputed to him by the Apologists. It is no uncommon event, even in the present day, that a rationalist writer is unable to recognize his opinions in the shape which they have assumed in the writings of his orthodox assailants. And in this respect it is probable that

<sup>1</sup> γνωσις, 1 Cor. viii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 6 ff.

<sup>3</sup> We do know that Paul claimed that his preaching of the Gospel had been accompanied by signs and wonders, and it is quite possible that his opponents within the Church ascribed this to magic.

modern controversialists have degenerated, at least in Protestant lands, in works addressed to the general public; since they have to bear in mind the possibility of exposure if the perversion is too palpable, and such exposure could not always be concealed from their followers. That we fail to recognize the opinions of Paul is therefore of itself no sufficient ground for concluding that he could not have been the person originally aimed at. It appears more probable, on the whole, that there were two separate legends, since not only is Simon once at least pointedly distinguished from Paul, but there are many traits which indicate that two inconsistent narratives have been blended together—Simon, for instance, in one place claiming to have learned his doctrines of Jesus in visions and dreams, and in others to be himself the self-subsisting Being, and to be the embodiment on earth of the three persons of the Trinity.<sup>1</sup>

But, in any event, the legend which represented Peter as the adversary of Paul must have been of early growth. Whatever may be the date of the Clementines, whether Homilies or Recognitions, in their present form they must certainly be founded upon earlier documents. We cannot suppose that the strong personal feeling against Paul which they display could be the mere echo of a controversy long since terminated by the death of both of the parties; especially if, as orthodox critics insist, they had been almost immediately reconciled—nor even if, as we suppose, the process of reconciliation commenced among their respective followers very shortly after their death. The allusions to Paul bear the impress of a time when the memory of the conflict was fresh, and the wounds it had inflicted were still unhealed. It has been suggested that the two works were composed by Ebionites in the latter part of the second or the beginning of the third century; and the reasons assigned seem to show that this was probably the time at which they received their final form. But as that sect openly rejected the authority of Paul, refusing him the title of Apostle, there could be no rea-

<sup>1</sup> Hom. xvii. c. 13 ff.; Recog. B. ii. c. 7, 14, 15, &c.



son, if the works had been originally written at that time, why they should cloak their attacks upon him under a name which would prevent the uncritical readers of the day from discovering who was meant. We see, however, from the Apocalypse that the orthodox contemporaries of Paul paid so much respect to the position he had occupied, and probably continued to occupy, in the Church, as to refer to him only indirectly, and by epithets which would point him out to the initiated without needlessly exposing the breach to the general body. We might therefore expect a similar reticence in other writings originating with the same party at or near to the same time. And it is not easy to suppose that after the lapse of considerably more than a century, the mere question of the comparative personal pretensions of Peter and Paul could have possessed the vivid interest which is attached to it in these writings. The feeling they display seems appropriate enough to the time when the original hostility to Paul, caused by his share in the early persecutions of the Church, had been rekindled by his open opposition to Peter and the contemptuous language in which he had afterwards referred to his character and conduct, but could scarcely be looked for after the lapse of several generations had effaced the sharpness of the first impression. And it is highly improbable that the contest itself should have provoked no protest against Paul's pretensions and insubordination, and that its mere memory so long afterwards should have excited such a lively animosity.

But then if there had been any writings by a contemporary of Paul written during the period of conflict that preceded his last visit to Jerusalem, or shortly afterwards, which assailed him under the name of Simon, whether originally identified with the Magician of Samaria or not, it would be quite consistent with the plan pursued by the author of the Acts that he should have adopted portions of these writings; so modifying them, however, as to exclude the possibility that they could refer to Paul, thus at once neutralizing their effect. And as we can scarcely accept the mission to the Samaritans as historical, and the assumed

interview with Simon falls at once with the incidents with which it is connected, this is perhaps the most probable conclusion.

If, however, we are unable to accept the story of the preaching of the Gospel to the Samaritans, both on account of its intrinsic improbabilities and the obvious purpose by which the writer is actuated, there are almost equal difficulties in that of the conversion and baptism of Cornelius. We have already pointed out<sup>1</sup> the relation it bears to the claims and conduct of Paul as compared with those of Peter, and its obviously apologetic character. These necessarily affect its credibility, and it appears to be further impeached by the claim made by Paul to be the especial Apostle of the Gentiles, by the position he assigns to Peter as the especial Apostle of the Jews, and by his description of the partition of the field of the world, in which the Gentiles were assigned to Barnabas and himself, and the Jews to the three leaders of the Church; which could not have been made if the Holy Spirit had thus commissioned Peter to the former. But we are not, perhaps, justified in supposing that the language of Paul expresses the opinion of Peter or of the other two parties to the compact described, or that they would have recognized the exclusive pretensions of Paul, or even that such pretensions were put forward at the time. And the objections to the story founded upon the supposed object of the writer, attach rather to the details of the scene than to the fact of Peter having admitted an influential Gentile by baptism. If it may be said that the purpose of the writer was to exalt Peter by showing that he first of all had taken the decisive and all-important step of admitting Gentiles to the Church by baptism merely, and at the same time by this example, and by the reasons which induced it, to justify the corresponding practice and motives of Paul, it must be remembered, on the other hand, that there can be scarcely a doubt that Gentile members had been admitted in this manner to the church of Antioch (and therefore, probably, to other churches) before Paul joined that church. And there is nothing improbable

<sup>1</sup> Introduction.

in the suggestion that the responsibility of first taking such a step might have been assumed by Peter. Making allowance, however, for the mitigating force of these considerations, it is impossible to accept the narrative as it now stands, or to regard it in any other light than as either the free development by the writer of a legend current in the Church, or wholly his own invention. The actors in the scene, and the manner in which they are represented as acting—the humility of a Roman centurion in presence of the Galilean fisherman and Jewish fugitives—the visions to Peter and Cornelius—and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the audience under the influence of the preaching of Peter, with the marvellous manifestations it produces—whatever else they may be, certainly are not history. We may say with confidence, that if Peter really did admit the first Gentile converts by baptism, it was not in the manner nor for the reasons described.

But we may, perhaps, accept the story as showing the early existence of a belief in the Church that Gentiles might be admitted without being required to conform to the whole Law, and possibly also as indicating that the first relaxation of the rule occurred in the case of some person of superior position, whose adhesion it was thought desirable to secure even at the price of such a concession. It is quite possible that at the time of the composition of the Acts, when Gentiles had unquestionably become an important element in the Church, there were legends connecting their first admission with Peter, perhaps with reason; but perhaps only on the ground of his having preached in Gentile cities, almost certainly to Gentiles, and of his being believed to have suffered death at their hands. But whatever doubts may exist as to the share of Peter in the matter, we may assume that some must have been received into the society almost contemporaneously with its extension beyond the limits of Palestine—in fact almost contemporaneously with the return of any of the Hellenistic Jews who had become members to their own place of residence.

This is one of the cases in which there is reason to suppose that a too exclusive reliance upon the statements of Paul, and upon a single passage in the Acts (xi. 19), has tended to withdraw attention from the inferences we are entitled to draw from the known habits of the new converts as Jews, and from the natural effects of the fundamental Christian conception. It was a recognized duty on the part of a Jew to make converts wherever he was placed, the only exception, apparently, being in the case of the Samaritans; and it was not necessary that the proselyte should submit to the whole Law; he might be a proselyte of the gate without being a proselyte of righteousness. If he abjured the false gods whom his nation worshipped, and served Jehovah only, and if he would submit to the rules recognized by the so-called apostolical decree, he was admitted into the former class, and as such to a share in the favour of the one true God, and in the privileges enjoyed by his servants. And there are abundant proofs in the literature of the time of the zeal and success with which the work of propagandism was carried on. Roman historians and satirists, no less than the Jewish Philo, bear witness to the fact, though they naturally regard it from a different point of view; and the same testimony is borne indirectly by the description in the Acts, where in almost every place in which there was a synagogue we find Grecians, or proselytes of the gate, appearing as an important element.

If, however, such was the duty of a Jew under ordinary circumstances, much more would it be so in the case of those Jews who had been baptized into the name of Jesus, and who were looking for his immediate return to establish his kingdom; for the time was short, and it behoved them to take every opportunity of adding to the number of his followers. If, therefore, they preached at first to Jews only, it was almost a matter of course that, as soon as they were established in any place, they should begin to address Gentiles also; and the hopes they held out and the doctrines they taught were of a nature to attract many who would be unaffected by the ordinary Jewish teaching. For they

proclaimed, in the language of their day, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity—the two last as essential features of their society, and the first as realized spiritually by means of their adoption into the family of God, and as about to be realized outwardly in the new kingdom which Jesus was to found. It is true that the equality which they taught did not, so far as we are informed, imply equality of possessions; that appears to have been confined to Jerusalem and to the first stage of the Church; but only equality in the sight of God and in the face of the Church. The distinctions which elsewhere existed, and which so long as the present order of things endured it was needful to recognize, had no place within the society. Inside of that circle, all were equal, or only distinguished by their different degrees of usefulness and spirituality. The master might be a silent worshipper, while his slave poured forth the mystic utterances of the tongues, or led the prayers of the brethren, or prophesied before them; and the wealthy might find themselves subordinated to men poor in the gifts of fortune, but rich in those of the Holy Spirit. And the circumstance that those first addressed were seemingly, with rare exceptions, members of the poorer classes, principally indeed slaves, would of course facilitate the growth of the society; for the good news proclaimed, while it taught that all within the Church were essentially equal, taught also that they were exclusively and exceptionally privileged as regarded those who were without. It would, therefore, be a matter of course that the Gospel should be very widely preached to Gentiles, and almost a matter of course that many Gentiles should be attracted by the prospects it unfolded, and should seek to become members of the society.

But as soon as a convert was made, the question could not fail to be raised, whether he could be admitted to the society by baptism while still a Gentile; especially when that admission involved the right to share in the memorial feast—the essential privilege of brotherhood, as baptism was its seal. In admitting a proselyte of righteousness, it was necessary that he should be bap-



tized, but this ceremony was not performed until after he had submitted to the rite of circumcision; so that to administer baptism to a man yet uncircumcised would not only seem to break down the barrier between Jew and Gentile to the exclusive advantage of the latter, but would violate the established rule in such matters. And yet, on the other hand, to refuse baptism unless the candidate for admission were circumcised, would place the new sect at a disadvantage as compared with other Jews, and would necessarily arrest its progress by repelling the vast majority of Gentile converts. Probably, however, the practical difficulty at first was less than we should be disposed to imagine. The materials of the Supper were bread and wine,<sup>1</sup> with neither of which was any ceremonial uncleanness connected; and if celebrated in the house of a Jew, or in a building devoted to the purpose of meeting, there would be no objection on the ground of Jews going into the houses of men uncircumcised to eat with them. And it would be understood that whatever privileges belonged to a Jew by reason of his being circumcised, could only be shared by Gentiles upon the same terms, and that outside the Church the relations between the two classes were unaffected by the mere act of baptism. So that a neophyte would only be required, before admission, to profess a belief in Jehovah, and in Jesus as His Son, or as the Messiah who was to found the kingdom of heaven, and, after admission, to practise the rules imposed upon proselytes of the gate. Such an arrangement would not exclude the recommendation of circumcision as the means of entitling Gentile converts to full communion. Nor would it, probably, remove all the objections of the more scrupulous brethren, especially among the Palestinian Jews. It would, nevertheless, furnish a practical, though it might be only temporary, solution of the difficulty.

The account given of the founding of the church at Antioch appears to confirm the view we have thus taken, and to illustrate the relations of these new societies to the parent society at

<sup>1</sup> Or bread and water.

Jerusalem. We are told that men of Cyprus and Cyrene, on their arrival in that city, spoke to Greeks,<sup>1</sup> preaching the Lord Jesus with much success, so that "great numbers believed and turned to the Lord;" and then, that upon the news of their success reaching Jerusalem, Barnabas was sent to assume the direction of the church thus founded. It is true that Antioch is the only place named, because of its connection with the subsequent career of Paul; but there can be no ground whatever for supposing that this was the only place in which the Gospel was preached to all who would listen, without regard to nationality. If "men of Cyprus and Cyrene" preached to Greeks in Antioch, where their stay might be expected to be only temporary, we may be sure they would equally do so when they returned to their own country: and they would not be the only brethren to take this course. From whatever region the visitors at Jerusalem who might have joined the church had come, they would, on returning thither, carry with them the good news, and be ready to announce them to whomsoever would listen, and to welcome all who sought an entrance into the society. And we may be equally sure that, as soon as the number of converts in any place became large, there would be some regular system of supervision established by the church at Jerusalem. This would be essential; for only thus could the unity of the faith be maintained, and harmony and order be preserved in the body. And at this time Christianity, if we may venture on the anachronism, was not a doctrine, but a society—not a creed, but a church. We must, apparently, regard Antioch, not, as it seems to be presented, as a solitary instance, but rather as a type of what was occurring in many different cities, though possibly in most upon a smaller scale. Nor is it likely that Antioch was the only place from which contributions were sent to the support of the church of Jerusalem, since all Jews regarded it as a duty to relieve, according to their

<sup>1</sup> Acts xi. 20 ff. The word is "Grecians" in the authorized version, following the Textus Receptus, but the context and subsequent narrative seem to require us to read Greeks.

means, their poorer brethren in that city; and they would neither neglect this obligation on joining the new sect, nor omit to recommend its observance to their converts.

In thus widening the sphere of action of the early disciples, we must not, however, exaggerate their success. Long after this, Tertullian wrote: "*Ubi tres ibi Ecclesia;*"<sup>1</sup> and the reported promise of Jesus that where two or three were gathered together in his name he would be in their midst, points to a similar conclusion. The brethren would form a church wherever they might be settled, but that church might in the beginning consist only of the members of a single family, or of a few scattered individuals from separate families, principally of the lower classes. The Jews who believed might not withdraw from the synagogue in the first instance, but they must have a separate place for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, which, when Gentiles had joined them, would be the place for the weekly meetings of the brethren. And this would lead to the establishment of a separate synagogue, or church; for the early churches were not only modelled upon the synagogue, but were synagogues in which the Law and the Prophets were read, but in which in addition Jesus was preached as the Messiah. It is probable, too, that in every place in which a church existed there would be accessions, often numerous accessions, from Gentiles, to whom the new doctrines would possess an attraction that the Jewish faith in its original form would fail to exercise. These churches would, for the most part, be obscure, only in a few exceptional instances emerging into the light of history; and by that time the circumstances of their foundation and the names of their founders would be almost invariably forgotten. But each one of them formed a centre from which the faith might spread, and was capable of indefinite enlargement; and they were all embraced in the larger organization of the Church; the members, wheresoever admitted, possessing

<sup>1</sup> It is true that Tertullian gives a spiritual turn to the expression—the three being the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—but we may, it seems, fairly assume that the phrase had originally a literal meaning.

rights of communion in every fraternity, and being expected to submit to the authority of the recognized leaders of the society.

It is obvious that this right of fellowship must have implied not only an Organization in which all of the separate churches were embraced, but also some ceremony of initiation, and presumably some preliminary trial or probation; and there must have been some sign or password by which the brethren might be enabled to recognize each other, and thus guard against the intrusion of the curious or the hostile. We know that the initiatory rite was baptism; but we have no information as to the safeguards by which its administration was surrounded in ordinary cases, nor as to the subsequent means of recognition. Probably the candidate was required to prove his sincerity by some test, of which prayer and fasting would be part,<sup>1</sup> and then to repeat a short formula expressing his belief in Jehovah as the one God, and in Jesus Christ as His Son.<sup>2</sup> And in addition to this there would probably be required a testimony from two or more members of the society of his fitness. It is probable, too, that the white stone with its mystic inscription, promised to those who are faithful (Rev. ii. 17), may contain a tacit reference to one of the tokens of membership in the society. And the care which was taken in guarding the original credo from the knowledge of all but the initiated, it being forbidden to write it, or to utter it excepting at a meeting of the members, or at least in presence of those who were themselves initiated, may have resulted from the circumstance of its having been employed from the institution of the society as a test of membership.<sup>3</sup> That this secrecy was observed and imposed with regard to its use, is shown conclusively by the language of the Fathers from Tertul-

<sup>1</sup> Clem. Recog. B. vii. c. 34—38. Justin, First Apol. c. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Acts ix. 37; Rom. x. 9; 1 John ii. 22, iv. 2, 15, v. 1, &c.

<sup>3</sup> It is possible that upon giving the sign of recognition, whatever that might be, the person to whom it was given would repeat the first words of the formula, which the other would then be expected to complete.

lian to Augustine,<sup>1</sup> and still more by the silence of Justin in his First Apology;<sup>2</sup> where writing, not for the brethren but for the outside world, he describes the ceremony of baptism as though there had been no formal profession of faith on the occasion. As, however, it is impossible to suppose that this ever could have been the case, his silence must be taken as a proof of his observance of that rule of secrecy as to the profession required, which we see from later writers was adopted by the Church. But as these were matters excluded from writing, we can only infer what was the precise form, since by the time the Church had obtained sufficient power to disregard the rule of secrecy, the nature of the probation imposed and the profession to be made by the neophyte previous to baptism had become far more elaborate, and we may suspect had partially changed their character in the process.

But it is clear that from the first the privileges of the society belonged only to its members, and there can be little doubt that they were held to be conferred by the rite of baptism, which admitted them to membership. Whatever those privileges might be—fellowship with Christ and with the saints—a share in the favour of God—forgiveness of sins and an assured entrance into the kingdom of heaven,—no one could possess them unless he were baptized into the name of Jesus, and whoever was so baptized was at once admitted to their participation. The separation between the Church and the world was absolute, and it was defined by the administration of this rite. A man did not cease to belong to the world by reason of his belief in the truths taught, for the devils also might believe; and though in many cases the believing individual might not be far from, he would not be of, the kingdom of God. He had not the seal of

<sup>1</sup> Most of the passages are given in Nicolas—*Symbole des Apôtres*—though he seems to mistake their obvious import as bearing upon the previous practice of the Church.

<sup>2</sup> Printed as the First in Clark's *Ante-Nicene Library*, but ordinarily quoted as the Second.



the New Covenant, and, therefore, had no mark by which he could be recognized as entitled to its benefits. Without the Church there could be no safety, at any rate for Gentiles; while within its precincts all were safe, and no one could enter those precincts unless by baptism.

This belief, from our modern Protestant standpoint, may be regarded as formal and narrow, and as excluding from the benefits of the death of Jesus all but an inconsiderable portion of mankind; but when the Gospel was first preached it presented an opposite aspect, and tended to shock men by its laxity. To open to all men, of whatever rank or condition or race, an entrance into the kingdom of heaven upon such terms as these,—to proclaim that sins, for whose remission, even to the children of the Covenant, the minute regulations of the Mosaic ritual had been prescribed, could be forgiven and washed away in Gentiles by the cleansing waters of baptism upon confession and repentance and the profession of a belief in God and Christ,—was to the Jews, and probably to all to whom the new faith was preached, an unprecedented stretch of liberality.<sup>1</sup> And in proportion as this aspect of the ceremony was realized would its importance be exaggerated, until some were led to regard it as a substitute for the whole elaborate system of sacrifices under the former dispensation,<sup>2</sup> accomplishing completely what they only imperfectly performed. Men could not then help looking upon God, not indeed as altogether such an one as themselves, but as actuated by similar impulses and as pursuing methods analogous to those which they witnessed in the proceedings of their rulers. That nothing more than this should be imposed was therefore so striking a proof of love and mercy, that they overlooked the necessary limitation to the exercise of these qualities which the requirement involved.

It is, however, a singular instance of survival that now, after

<sup>1</sup> We shall subsequently have to examine the question of the position of baptized brethren at this time more fully in connection with the life of Paul.

<sup>2</sup> Clem. Recog. B. i. c. 39.

the lapse of eighteen centuries, men should continue to conceive of God under similar conditions, and should be able to believe that His relations to any given man can be affected by the circumstance of a certain outward ceremony having or not having been performed, and even by the manner of its performance. It was excusable in those who were familiar with the capricious and arbitrary despotisms of the time, and who only recognized Divine intervention in the exceptional, ordinarily the disastrous, phenomena of nature, to believe that the Divinity could be appeased by sacrifices or could be propitiated by ceremonies; but those who are familiar with the conception of law as supreme in the government of states and in the order of the universe, should surely rise to some worthier idea of the nature and procedure of the Supreme Being. It must be remembered, too, that at this time there was an almost universal belief in the power exercised by the use of names and charms, and by talismans and lustrations, and that those who believed in this magical efficacy could find no difficulty in attributing a supernatural power to this lustration and the formula of initiation; while now this latter belief subsists, a solitary but by no means harmless relic of a whole class of extinct superstitions.

It is not easy to determine by whom the rite was administered. In the Acts, with the single, apparent, exception of Ananias, who baptizes Paul, it is only administered by the Apostles, or by persons who have been set apart and consecrated by the laying on of hands; and probably this might have been understood to have been the case with Ananias also. But it is possible that any brother who found himself in a position to preach the word, and who succeeded in winning converts, felt himself also authorized to admit them by baptism, at least if he could procure the presence of two other qualified disciples to constitute a church. There are difficulties on either view. On the one side, it seems in a high degree improbable that any erratic brother should have been permitted, of himself, or if he could procure the concurrence of two initiated persons, to admit whomsoever he pleased upon

such examination or profession as satisfied himself merely, to the full privileges of the society. And, on the other hand, considering the importance of the ceremony and its necessity to salvation, it is difficult to suppose that promising converts should be prevented from entering the Church because no one was at hand qualified to admit them. And yet the very importance attached to the ceremony might be a reason for restricting its administration to officers appointed for the purpose.<sup>1</sup> On the whole, then, it appears more probable that the ceremony could only be regularly performed by persons duly authorized, and at a properly constituted meeting of the society formed by at least three fully initiated members; and that if exceptional circumstances could justify a departure from this rule, so far as administering the rite was concerned, yet that any one so baptized would have to submit himself to some examination by a qualified authority before being fully recognized as a member.<sup>2</sup>

The view, therefore, that we are disposed to take of the organization of the Church at this time, is that of a parent society at Jerusalem, presided over by the Apostles and presbyters, with James, the brother of Jesus, at their head, and of a number of affiliated societies, with officers, a bishop, and, where the numbers admitted, presbyters also,<sup>3</sup> appointed or confirmed by the parent society, to which they all owed allegiance, and to whose funds they were no doubt expected to contribute. These societies were in some instances formed by persons expressly delegated for the purpose, either by the Apostles or by the leaders of one of the societies that had been already affiliated, as in the case of the mission of Barnabas and Saul. We suppose, however, that in very many instances individual disciples had preached the

<sup>1</sup> We shall have to consider the case of the baptism of the eunuch by Philip in connection with Paul's baptism of the jailer at Philippi.

<sup>2</sup> When baptism was administered to infants in order that they might not be excluded from the kingdom of heaven, the rite of confirmation was added before they were admitted to full membership.

<sup>3</sup> Or perhaps we should rather say two or more presbyters, of whom one acted as president.

Gospel and had organized societies, but that these would not become affiliated until they had received the sanction of the church at Jerusalem. This sanction would ordinarily be conferred by letters, though, whenever practicable, they would be visited by a delegate from the parent church, whose function would be not only to "consecrate" officers when that was requisite, but to see that the needful discipline was maintained, to explain more fully the way of the Lord to the brethren, and to warn them against the various errors to which they might be exposed. Probably the nearest analogy to the condition of the Church at this period would be that of a society like the Freemasons in the middle ages,<sup>1</sup> though of course the analogy suggested applies only to the organization of the Church, and not to its objects or principles.

This view of the manner in which the Church was extended does not necessarily conflict with the claims of Paul, since the founders of such churches as we have supposed could, in the majority of cases, have no claim to be regarded as Apostles. Their task would be simply that of communicating the good news of the coming kingdom to those with whom they might be brought in contact in their daily life, not of travelling to distant lands for the purpose. Each one would, as a rule, be confined to one place, and his success would ordinarily depend upon the inherent attraction of the doctrines he taught, and not upon his eloquence or ability in their teaching. But it was apparently in this manner and by such men that the Gospel was first preached in Rome and Puteoli, and there can be little doubt that the same was the case in Alexandria and Cyrene, and in Ephesus also, as well as in numerous other cities. And wherever Christ was preached and churches were founded in his name, the preachers would base their doctrines upon the authority of the Apostles, and the churches would be connected with, and in some measure subordinate to, the church of Jerusalem.

From the time of the reconstitution of the Church after the

<sup>1</sup> Except that the Freemasons excluded women.

first dispersion, it appears to have existed peacefully until after the appointment of Herod to be king of Judæa. It is true that this conclusion rests mainly upon the absence of any intimation to the contrary, and it may even be said to be contradicted by the account of the persecution which drove Paul from Jerusalem. But that account is so absolutely at variance with Paul's own statement, which in this matter appears to be entitled to full credit, as to destroy all its value; and the manner in which Paul himself refers to his visit and his interview with Peter certainly does not suggest the existence of any persecution of the Church at the time. And we can understand both the period of tranquillity and its subsequent interruption. A society founded upon a belief in the second coming of Jesus to set up his throne in Jerusalem, would be popular as a silent protest against Roman authority, while it might come into collision with that of Herod. To recognize his title might well appear to the members to be treason to their own king, and any refusal of such recognition would be held to constitute an act of treason to Herod. And the Jews who were well satisfied with the rule of Herod, and were ready to postpone their Messianic expectations whenever they had a king of their own race and faith to govern them, would be naturally indignant with men who remained obstinately disloyal to such a ruler. It can excite no surprise, therefore, that one of the leaders of the sect should be slain and another imprisoned, any more than that the prison doors should be opened for the latter; or that Herod, believing that his guards must have been privy to the evasion, should have punished some of them by death. But we may doubt whether an angel would have so managed the escape as to throw the blame upon innocent men, and then have left them to suffer the consequences; and may prefer to believe that secret members of the society were ready to risk their lives to secure the safety of a valued leader. And the view that connects the persecution of the Church with the position and claims of Herod, appears to be in part confirmed by the circumstance that it ceases with his death, after which we



find Peter living again in Jerusalem, and the meetings of the society held in safety.

It has been almost uniformly assumed, following the view taken in the Acts, that all the persecutions of the early Church were solely on religious grounds ; but it seems difficult to accept such a conclusion. That the conduct which provoked the measures of repression or punishment was the outcome of the religious convictions of the disciples, is probably true ; but it is equally probable that the authorities interfered only because the conduct itself was regarded as inconsistent with order or threatening the public tranquillity. From the point of view of religious societies, almost all measures directed against them are regarded as persecutions for the sake of religion ; but there are many cases in which the mere religious aspect of the question is quite immaterial to the authorities, and only is recognized because it is found in practice associated with violations of the law in matters plainly within the cognizance of the State, or with proceedings that threaten the safety of the State itself. Thus, during the reign of Elizabeth, the plots directed against her person and government by Romanists were no doubt the result of a sincere religious belief that Protestantism was a deadly heresy, and that assassination and rebellion were lawful and meritorious acts, if so the triumph of the true faith might be secured. But it would be very unjust to regard laws which were framed upon the belief that Romanists, and especially Romish priests, would endeavour to procure the assassination of the Queen and the overthrow of the Government, and which therefore forbade the one to reside within the kingdom and the others to profess their religion, as primarily or essentially acts of religious persecution. Those who suffered under these laws regarded themselves as martyrs, and were regarded as such by their co-religionists, but they were punished as conspirators and rebels. And the laws themselves were measures of self-defence, provoked by the conduct of the class against which they were directed, and justified by the result. No doubt in such legislation religious motives are

apt to become mixed up with secular; and there will be many who support it, not because the proscribed religion is dangerous, but because it is false. And Governments often continue the repression on religious grounds long after all danger to the State has apparently passed. Often, too, it has happened that the persecution is a persecution on religious grounds from the beginning. But it is right to remember that the proceedings of religious bodies frequently present a very different aspect to those who regard them from without, from that which they present to their own members. To punish falsehood by death might be a religious duty with Peter, and be acquiesced in as such by the members of the sect; but to the Government and to the friends of the victims, who were not members, it would appear as a wanton murder. And so, to deny the kingship of Herod because it conflicted with the paramount claims of Jesus, would no doubt be felt as a religious obligation by the Nazarenes; but Herod could not, consistently with his own position, allow any weight to such considerations. It would be nothing to him that they looked forward to the return of Jesus in the clouds of heaven, if in the mean time they would recognize his title and be obedient to his authority. But if they denied the one, there could be no security that they would not resist the other; and he might believe, perhaps with more reason than we should be disposed to allow, that severe measures were necessary.

These conjectures may be unfounded, and the common opinion, which regards the measures directed against the infant Church as having been prompted by exclusively religious motives, may be correct. But then it is not easy to account for the circumstance that these measures are represented as being taken, at first, just at the time when large public gatherings and tumultuous manifestations caused by preaching the resurrection and second coming of Jesus disturbed the peace of Jerusalem; next, after the disappearance of two members of the society, who we are told had been miraculously put to death at one of their meetings; and then, again, just when there is a king in Judæa

whose title we may be certain the new sect felt itself unable to recognize; and that at all other times they appear to have lived in peace, gradually acquiring favour with the people. M. Renan suggests that the periods of persecution coincided with periods of comparative independence in Judæa, which left the authorities free to follow their habitual tendency to punish all who were guilty of offences against the national religion. But this suggestion does not explain the first persecution, the account of which implies a special zeal for the Jewish faith, and an exemplary obedience to the requirements of the Law, in the disciples; such, indeed, as to make them eminently popular with the multitude, who were always sensitive to anything that appeared to impeach their exclusive obligations and privileges, and would have certainly resented any apparent heterodoxy. Nor does it explain the subsequent peaceful sojourn of the Apostles in Jerusalem and the growth of the sect in that city, not merely without provoking the interference of the rulers, but also without any indications of disfavour with the people; who, if the new sect had really been regarded as hostile to the Law, would have found abundant opportunities, as they did in the case of Paul, of manifesting their dissatisfaction. The Sanhedrim might be prevented by the presence of the Roman governor from any official interference with the proceedings of a sect whose only offence was of a nature which the Roman law did not recognize; but the populace would not therefore be balked of its vengeance; and many occasions must have been furnished for its gratification. The probable conclusion appears to be, that the conduct of the disciples was, indeed, the result of their religious convictions, but that the measures adopted against them were dictated by secular motives, and were directed, not against their opinions, but against the acts which those opinions produced. And excepting upon the persecution arising on the occasion which caused the death of Stephen, there is no appearance of measures directed against the society in general.

Nor is it easy to understand what there was in the belief of

the disciples at Jerusalem that could be regarded as heterodox. They differed from other Jews, so far as we can understand, only in the circumstance that they believed Jesus to be that Messiah whom all were expecting. But that was a matter outside of the Law, and upon which the most rigidly orthodox might be permitted to hold different opinions; just in the same manner that at the present time individuals or communities may have their particular views with regard to the time and the manner of the second coming of Jesus, or may even doubt whether he will ever come to found an earthly kingdom, without affecting their right to be regarded as orthodox. But the Apostles and their followers in Jerusalem were pure Jews—keeping the Law and walking orderly—having, it may be, their separate synagogues, but joining in the services of the Temple, and minutely fulfilling every ceremonial requirement. There was nothing, consequently, to render them obnoxious to popular suspicion so long as Jerusalem was ruled by Roman governors; for all Jews, excepting the Sadducees, would agree with them in refusing to recognize their authority as lawful, and all were expecting the appearance of a deliverer. They were, indeed, no more heterodox than the followers of John the Baptist, who clearly were not so regarded, and from whom at this time, in Jerusalem at least, they differed chiefly in the circumstance that the one admitted disciples by baptizing them into the name of him that should come, and the other by baptizing them into the name of Jesus.

It is no doubt difficult to accept this conclusion, for we are almost inevitably impelled to suppose that the Christianity of the Apostles was the same as our own, or at least that they held and taught whatever doctrines are contained in the New Testament. Looking upon them as inspired, we ignore the necessary process of development through which all doctrines must pass, and suppose that the influence of the Spirit anticipated the tardy progress of generations. We, Protestants at least, see clearly enough the development of doctrine in some particulars outside of the canon—the increasing honour paid to the Mother of

Jesus—the belief that the substance of the Eucharistic elements is changed by the act of consecration, and other such points; but we are apt to overlook the fact that there must necessarily have been a corresponding development within the period that the canon embraces. We forget that the same doctrines must be apprehended under a different form by a Jew to whom the Law and the Prophets were primarily and essentially sacred, and who believed in Jesus because he expected him to restore the one and realize the predictions of the other, and a Gentile to whom the resurrection and second coming of Jesus were the great central facts, and who accepted the Law and the Prophets only because they prefigured and foretold these events. And, at this time at least, whatever may have been the case afterwards, there had been no opportunity for any reaction upon the doctrines of the Church to be produced by the accession of Gentile converts, even had they been sufficiently numerous to give any weight to their opinions. But as soon as we attempt to represent the position and beliefs of the infant Church from the historical point of view, we see the fallacy of our original conceptions. All of the Apostles were Jews of Palestine, and the first converts belonged principally to the same class. It is true that, according to the Acts, foreign Jews formed an important minority in the Church; but this circumstance, though it might produce divisions within the body, would not affect its opinions, since these foreign Jews were, for the most part, as zealous for the Law and as jealous of the exclusive privileges of their nation as their brethren of Palestine. It was they who, we are told, everywhere raised opposition to the preaching of Paul, and who finally excited the tumult in the Temple from which he barely escaped with his life. And a society composed exclusively of Jews, living in the Jewish metropolis, habitually joining in the services of the Temple, and at first preaching to none but Jews, could not but be orthodox. It was impossible that they should have taught the abrogation of a law which they scrupulously obeyed, or the worthlessness of a distinction which they every-



where recognized. If, then, they were from time to time exposed to persecution, this must have resulted from some other grounds than the heterodoxy of their essential doctrines, and these grounds we have endeavoured to indicate.

It was during this second period that the society received the accession of Saul of Tarsus. With his entrance upon the scene our materials become more abundant and more trustworthy; though the questions connected with his conduct and character, and his position in the Church, are at least as numerous and as full of difficulty as those we have previously encountered.

## CHAPTER III.

### CONVERSION OF PAUL AND HIS FIRST MISSION.

Little known of former history of Paul—Probably an officer of the Sanhedrim—Sent to Damascus—Account of conversion—Contains implicit contradiction of his claims to have seen Jesus, and of his having then received special mission to Gentiles—Effects of abandonment of service of High-priest—Visit to Jerusalem—Discrepancies between account in Acts and that given by Paul—Probable incompleteness of the latter—Motives of visit—Views of Paul at the time substantially identical with those of Church of Jerusalem—Would not otherwise have been recognized—Obscurity of his position in Syria and Cilicia—Removed to Antioch by Barnabas—Church of Antioch—Journey to Jerusalem with alms for the brethren—Setting apart of Barnabas and Paul—Preach in Cyprus in synagogues—Interview with Sergius Paulus—Mark leaves the party—Different character of mission in Pisidia and Lycaonia—Preaching of Paul—Incidents of journey—Return to Antioch.

OUR first introduction to the Apostle Paul is on the occasion of the death of Stephen, when it is said that the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul, and that Saul was consenting to his death; and he is represented as the chief agent in the persecution that followed. We are told by himself that he was of pure Hebrew extraction, trained in the observances of the Law and in the traditions of the elders, in which he was exceptionally proficient, and for which he was zealous above measure. We learn further from the Acts that he was a citizen of Tarsus, brought up in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel, and by trade a tent-maker—a weaver of the cloths for which Cilicia was famous, and which were employed as a covering for tents. Presumably his means were narrow, since in enumerating his labours, sufferings, and sacrifices for the cause of Christ, he nowhere describes himself as having sustained any

pecuniary loss or having given up any property ; and as it was necessary for him to work for his living after his conversion, in those cases in which he did not deem it fitting to accept the ready assistance of the brethren, we may assume that it had been equally necessary before.

In that case, however, it would be natural to suppose that in the part he is related to have taken in the persecution of the Church, he was acting in some official capacity as a paid officer of the Sanhedrim. It was to be expected that the Christian legend should exaggerate his importance in describing his share in the first systematic attempt to crush the society, since this enhanced the merit of his conversion ; but it is difficult to suppose that he could at this time have occupied a position which enabled him to act independently ; while we can easily understand that his zeal, energy, and ability, would secure for him a leading part in any service in which he was engaged. We gather, accordingly, from the Acts, that when it was determined to break up the sect of the Nazarenes in Jerusalem, he was a principal agent in the proceedings, carrying out the instructions of the authorities with the same uncompromising determination that he afterwards displayed in preaching the Gospel. And this conduct recommended him for the important mission of arresting, probably, some prominent leader who had taken refuge in Damascus<sup>1</sup> (for we cannot suppose that the mission was undertaken for the purpose of securing the obscure rank and file of the body), for which purpose he was furnished with letters to the authorities of that city.

It was, we may believe, in the course of his journey while charged with this mission that the circumstances occurred which he afterwards described as God revealing His Son in him ; and of which we have more than one detailed narrative in the Acts. It is not needful to re-tell a story with which all of our readers are familiar, and which inevitably loses in force and picturesque-

<sup>1</sup> The Clementine Recognitions say that it was Peter, but this appears improbable. *Recog. B. i. c. 71.*

ness by any attempt to paraphrase the original account.<sup>1</sup> It is only necessary to recall the circumstance that we are here in the legendary portion of the Acts, and that, even on the assumption that Luke was the author, he would have nothing to guide him but his recollection of the various accounts which he might have heard on different occasions from Paul, accounts which would become heightened in their colouring as time partially effaced the original impression, and which afterwards would be subject to the same exaggerating process in the mind of Luke himself. But it is difficult to believe that this portion of the work can be due to a companion of Paul. It seems certain that this was the special occasion to which the Apostle refers when he claims to have seen Jesus. We cannot, therefore, suppose that any account given by him would have omitted this capital circumstance; nor would one who had heard the story from him have failed to record and emphasize that incident, to which in Paul's mind it owed its essential importance. The story as told, however, not merely omits, but by implication excludes, the idea of any bodily appearance; for Paul falls to the earth on the mere shining of the great light from heaven, and is blind when he rises, and the

<sup>1</sup> We may, however, reproduce it here in its first form (Acts ix. 1—9): "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high-priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said unto him, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men that journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth, and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand and brought him to Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink." (Verses 17—19): "And Ananias . . . putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales, and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened."

men who hear the voice, as he did, see no man. And not merely does it thus impliedly negative Paul's claim to have seen Jesus, but it is so framed as equally to contradict his claim to a direct divine revelation indicating the sphere of his operations, or imparting his peculiar doctrines. Paul, it is true, is represented as asking for guidance, but to this request no immediate reply is vouchsafed. He is only told in what quarter he is to seek direction. The divine vision is granted to Ananias, by whom Paul is to be admitted into the Church, and from whom we must assume that he was to receive the necessary instruction. In the face of these seeming contradictions, we only appear warranted in concluding that Paul left Jerusalem with the full purpose of carrying out the orders of the Sanhedrim for the arrest of the fugitive members of the society, and that he arrived in Damascus convinced of the resurrection of Jesus—a conviction which had been produced by some appearance in a vision—and prepared in the strength of that conviction to abandon his purpose, and to join the sect he was commissioned to destroy. And it is highly probable that the vision in which he believed himself to have seen Jesus was connected, either as cause or consequence, with some attack of illness.

The narrative in the Acts gives us one aspect of the motives and conduct of Paul—that in which it appeared to the brethren at the time, and to his friends in the Church subsequently; and that is the only aspect dwelt upon by orthodox commentators. Even M. Renan confines himself to this view of his conduct; and yet a moment's reflection might suffice to show that there was necessarily another aspect in which it would appear to those whose service he had renounced. Paul is represented as having put himself forward to solicit a commission from the high-priest to proceed to Damascus, for the purpose of arresting members of the sect, and bringing them, we must assume for trial, to Jerusalem. It is said, indeed, that the letters with which he was furnished were addressed to the synagogues; but it must have been requisite to obtain the sanction of the authorities in Damas-



cus before attempting to seize men living peacefully in that city, in order to carry them before an alien tribunal; and we may be certain that something had been done to secure their assent and co-operation. It was impossible, therefore, that a person thus authorized and accredited could have abandoned his employment, and have allied himself with the very persons whom he had undertaken to arrest as criminals, without provoking the resentment of the men whose service he had deserted, and exposing himself to the same punishment that he had been empowered to inflict. And probably he would have been liable to a greater, since from this point of view he was not only a criminal but a traitor.

We experience some difficulty in realizing this, for we look at his conduct only in the light in which it is presented to us in the New Testament: that being convinced of the essential articles of the Christian faith—the resurrection and divine Sonship of Jesus—by the vision of Jesus himself, and the consequent revelation which God made of him as His Son, he hesitated not to sacrifice everything to his conviction,—to give up office, friends, prospects in life, and even duty when it conflicted with the paramount claims of God, and to devote himself to the task of preaching Jesus as the Messiah; and we yield to him the admiration due to zeal, courage, and disinterestedness. But those, both in Jerusalem and Damascus, who had trusted and employed him, but whose service he had abandoned and whose projects he had frustrated, would necessarily look upon his proceedings with very different eyes. To them he would be a renegade who had sought employment for the purpose of betraying his employers; or at the best a person who, having accepted, or perhaps solicited, an important trust, had allowed himself to be seduced into a weak or criminal desertion of the duties it imposed. And we are bound to recognize the justice of this view. Not, perhaps, that Paul was wrong from his standpoint, but that certainly his employers would be right from theirs. We can therefore well understand how the governor of the city, to whom he had been

probably commissioned, and who must assuredly have been made aware of the object of his intended visit, and have been prepared to assist him, might cause the gates of Damascus to be watched for the purpose of apprehending him; and how, when by the assistance of the brethren, whose safety he had for the time secured, he was enabled to escape, he did not deem it safe to return to Jerusalem, but retired to Arabia, and did not visit that city until the lapse of time, or perhaps some change in the ruling body, might render it safe; and how, when it became essential to his purposes to proceed thither, he kept his presence as far as possible a secret, and was nevertheless compelled to seek safety in flight.<sup>1</sup> The public disputations in Damascus immediately after his baptism, and subsequently in Jerusalem, described in the Acts, are altogether inconsistent with his actual position, and are, we may believe, due exclusively to the imagination of the author, who, as he exhibits the Jews throughout as the opponents of Paul in his later labours, might feel bound here also to exhibit them as manifesting the same especial hostility from the first. But we could not accept them as true, even if they were not, as they appear to be, implicitly contradicted by Paul himself. Certainly, if we had nothing but his statements to guide us, we should conclude that it was not in Damascus nor in Jerusalem, but in Syria and Cilicia—not at once, but after his interviews with Peter and James—that he began to preach the faith he had once destroyed, and that the churches of Judæa, hearing of this, glorified God in him. It is no doubt true that there is nothing in his reference to Damascus inconsistent with his having preached there after his return from Arabia; but he does not say anything to lead to such a conclusion, and his allusion to his subsequent visit to Syria and Cilicia, before mentioning that the churches of Judæa had heard of his preaching, rather appears to imply that it was in those places that he first began to preach.

There is, however, no intrinsic improbability in the supposition that when circumstances rendered it safe for Paul to return

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 32, 33; Gal. i. 17, 20, 22; Acts ix. 29.

to Damascus, after his escape from the city, as might, in the shifting politics of that period, be the case within a comparatively short time, he would begin to preach the Gospel there, and that his assistance might be welcomed by those who had at first received him into the society. And in that event his preaching would be likely to excite the opposition of the Jews who did not belong to the body, who would be indignant at this open display of, what they would consider, his treachery. But if such were the case, it might have been expected that Paul would have introduced them into his description, instead of representing the attempt to apprehend him as being the sole act of the governor. In the brief notice given in his letter to the Galatians, there is nothing to suggest his having been driven from Damascus after he had returned from Arabia, or that he had encountered any persecution there; and his visit to Jerusalem appears to have been a voluntary journey. And as the author of the Acts is obviously mistaken in describing the incidents of the visit to Jerusalem, unless, indeed, we suppose Paul to have wilfully falsified an account which he gives under the sanction of an oath, it is probable that he may have equally misrepresented the course of events at Damascus. While, therefore, we are not perhaps entitled peremptorily to reject his account of the circumstances that drove Paul from the latter city, it is of the very slightest weight as an authority.

It is singular that, in describing Paul's visit to Jerusalem, as well as subsequently in the description of the first Council, the account of the proceedings of Paul appears in substance to be precisely such an account as that which the Apostle had in view in making his counter statement. He is represented as attempting to join himself to the brethren, who at first reject his companionship, and who are only induced to receive him when Barnabas vouches for his sincerity and introduces him to the Apostles; with whom he remains, and under whose auspices he preaches in Jerusalem. But this statement would be held to imply that the sanction of the Apostles was requisite in order to

his being recognized as a member of the society, and it might be used to show that the instruction of the Apostles was also necessary, or at least that it had been freely imparted. But Paul, without denying the alleged intervention of Barnabas, passes it over in a manner that would be scarcely truthful, and wholly ungenerous, if it had occurred; states positively that he was not introduced to the Apostles, but only saw Peter, and, possibly, James; and declares that he was not known by face to the churches in Judæa, in which, of course, writing from Ephesus<sup>1</sup> to brethren in Galatia, the churches in Jerusalem must have been included; and he makes this statement for the express purpose of proving his independence and originality. If the narrative we now have in the Acts were true, then the assertions which, as we may gather, had been made by the Judaizing teachers in Galatia would have had a true basis; and this it is Paul's object to deny. And though we may suspect that his memory may have been at fault in some particulars, and that in looking back for a period of probably fourteen years he had conceived of his position as more original and independent than it really was,—had unconsciously clothed the past in the colours of the present; yet in reference to the secrecy of his visit and his having seen only two of the chief Apostles, we appear to be bound to believe his statement.

The account given in the Acts, however, has probably a foundation in circumstances which Paul overlooked, or which he was desirous to keep out of sight. It was quite possible, having regard to his former position and conduct, that there were difficulties in the way, if not of his being recognized as a brother, yet at least of his being admitted as qualified to preach and to administer the rite of baptism; and that these could only be removed by procuring the sanction of the Apostles. If so, it would be but natural that they who had known him only in the character of a persecutor should require some guarantee of his

<sup>1</sup> Ephesus, according to M. Renan; or Greece, according to Messrs. Conybeare and Howson.

sincerity and trustworthiness ; and it is quite possible that the writer of the Acts may have preserved the name of the person by whom that guarantee was furnished. We have already referred to the probable organization of the Church at this time ; and, whatever exception may be taken to the suggestions we have made, at least it must be conceded that no society possessing any definite organization could allow a person who was not specially authorized to admit members to its privileges. Any one might, no doubt, solicit others to join—might “preach”—the society ; but those who were attracted by this preaching, and sought admission by baptism, must comply with the prescribed rules, and, habitually at least if not universally, be baptized at one of the formal meetings of the society by a qualified officer. The most democratic of modern Protestant sects admit members only under these or analogous conditions ; and in the circumstances of peril and difficulty in which the early Church was so often placed, it must have insisted upon this rule with especial emphasis. Paul might, no doubt, have founded a Church of his own ; sometimes at a subsequent period of his career he seems to have gone near to doing this ; but at this time there could have been nothing to tempt him to take such a course so long as there was any prospect of obtaining the recognition of the Apostles ; nor was there anything in his position to have given it any chance of success. But if he wished to be an agent of the society, he must conform to its rules, and exercise only such functions as its leaders might deem it expedient to confer.

We look at Paul in the light cast upon him by his own writings, and by the account of his subsequent proceedings contained in the Acts of the Apostles. But the Apostles and brethren at this time would see in him only the late converted persecutor, who had, indeed, proved his ability and energy by the part he had taken in the attempt to suppress the community, who now professed to be willing to employ in their service the faculties that had made him so formidable as an adversary, and whose sincerity was apparently proved by the sacrifices he had



made ; but still as one whose permanent adhesion to their cause was necessarily uncertain, and whose fitness had yet to be shown. Viewed in this light, there could not but have been some hesitation even as to his recognition, and it was utterly impossible that either he or any one could have dreamed of his being the equal of the Apostles, or independent of their authority. Admitting that Peter and James were satisfied that the Lord Jesus had spoken to him by the way—that, although it might show the adequacy of the cause which produced his conversion, and free him from the suspicion of interested or unworthy motives, yet could not place him upon a level with themselves. Nor could Paul, who only obtained admission to their presence through the instrumentality of Barnabas, have dreamed of claiming any such equality, for his own recent conduct would have at once refuted such a claim. We see that long after this, when his sincerity had been tested by many years of toil and suffering in the prosecution of his missionary labours, and when his rare powers as a preacher had been displayed in the conversion of multitudes, the fact that he had once persecuted the Church was used as an argument against his authority, even to the very men whom he had evangelized. And we may be sure that while the circumstances were fresh in the memory of all, not only would his right to teach have been denied, unless he had received a commission from the Apostles, but there would be difficulties in the way of granting such a commission.

It is quite probable, too, that these might be the true cause of his visit to Jerusalem. It might be that obstacles had been raised which could only be removed by a personal interview. However dangerous, consequently, it might be to visit that city, and thus place himself within the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrim, this danger must be risked, unless he were prepared to relinquish his purpose of preaching the Gospel in the name and with the authority of the Church. Hence the secrecy of his visit, and the limitation of his interviews almost exclusively to Peter ; James only,

in addition, being admitted to a knowledge of his presence and permitted to see him. It is suggested, indeed,<sup>1</sup> that these were the only two Apostles in Jerusalem at the time; but this suggestion is in the highest degree improbable, and opposed to the obvious force of the expression employed in the Acts. For it is made only for the purpose of "harmonizing" two accounts, which, even on this assumption, still remain hopelessly irreconcilable in spirit and tone. But Paul dared not, at the time, have called the attention of the authorities to his presence by any publicity in his proceedings. Either his visit must have been entirely concealed from their knowledge, as is most probable, or he must have purchased forbearance by a careful abstinence from anything that could excite public attention. We may, however, believe that, as the result of his intercourse with the two Apostles, he did obtain the recognition he sought, and that he was permitted to act, probably in some subordinate position, as an agent of the society. We may believe also that his visit was concealed from the members in general, and that it was not deemed expedient to allow him to come into contact with any of these, until services rendered to the cause had effaced the recollection of the sufferings they had so recently endured at his hands.

It seems impossible to question the substantial accuracy of the view thus taken, unless upon the assumption of supernatural influences which suspended or altered the natural course of feeling and of conduct both within and without the Church; and of these influences at the present time there is not a trace in the history. But if this was the position of the parties, it is impossible that the opinions then held by Paul could have been such as they afterwards became, for he could not in that case have been recognized by the Apostles, or even received into the Church. The time of his visit to Jerusalem is described as having been prior to the alleged conversion of Cornelius, at a

<sup>1</sup> Conybeare and Howson, Vol. I. p. 128.

time, consequently, when the society was composed exclusively of Jews,<sup>1</sup> and when the brethren assumed that none but Jews could be admitted, at least to its full privileges. And whether, with orthodox writers, we accept the account of that conversion as literally true, or whether we regard it only as a legendary representation of the circumstances under which Gentiles were admitted to those privileges, it shows the strength of the feeling against a complete opening of the doors of the Church to men uncircumcised. If Peter could not venture even to visit a man of position and influence—a devout man, willing to hear the Gospel—until authorized to do so by a divine vision, nor to baptize him, until he had received the Holy Ghost; and if, in spite of his rank in the Church, he was afterwards called to account for his conduct, much less could this have been conceded to Paul. It was impossible that Peter or James could have recognized him as a member of the society, and impossible, too, that the churches of God in Judæa should have glorified God in him when they heard of his preaching, unless he had preached circumcision, not perhaps as a condition of baptism, but as the summit and perfection of the Christian profession. Any such doctrines as those which he afterwards elaborated, if preached at this time, must have produced a schism in the Church that would inevitably have led to his expulsion. On his last visit to Jerusalem, accompanied by delegates from churches he had founded, and bearing the offerings of Gentile converts to the treasury of the Church, we see that he was required primarily and above everything, to prove his adherence to the Law, and only thus received as a brother. And we may be sure that at this first visit he could not even have obtained a hearing for doctrines which implied the nullity of the Law, but would have been at once rejected.

And not only may we be certain that the opinions of Paul at this time were different from what they afterwards became, but we may doubt whether he had any idea of what ultimately

<sup>1</sup> This, at least, is the view of the writer of the Acts.

proved to be his true sphere of action. We may believe that the narrative in the Acts is so far in accordance with the actual course of events, as that his resolution to devote himself to the task of evangelizing the Gentiles was originally forced upon him by his want of success in preaching to the Jews. There is nothing in his own brief description of his career given to the churches in Galatia that asserts, though no doubt the account suggests, that he began by preaching to Gentiles; and in the Acts there is no reference to any such preaching until after he has arrived at Antioch, in Pisidia. Nor is it until the occasion of his visit to Jerusalem, after his return from his missionary journey in company with Barnabas, and therefore, presumably, in consequence of the success that had attended it, that the chief Apostles gave the right hand of fellowship to himself and Barnabas that they should go to the Gentiles. And as, from what we have said, it would seem that he could not have preached at first without their sanction, the fact that this sanction was not given to his preaching to the Gentiles till many years afterwards, appears to show that he could not have addressed them at the beginning. It is therefore by no means impossible that in his recollections he should have partially antedated the course of events, and have assumed that his ultimate destination had been clearly indicated from the first, either forgetting or passing over as of no consequence his intermediate proceedings. But if he had preached Jesus to the Jews as the Messiah, he must also have preached him as the crown and fulfilment of the prophecies, the destined restorer of the kingdom to Israel, and must have connected these views with the maintenance and triumph of the Law. Addressing Jews he must have spoken as a Jew, since otherwise he would have inevitably repelled those whom it was his object to win. We learn from himself that such had been his practice, and it is probable that this manner of presenting the word to them had been anterior to the development of those views which formed the peculiar Gospel that he preached to the Gentiles, when he turned to them exclusively, or chiefly.

Apart, too, from considerations of this nature, we may be sure from what we know of Paul's character from his writings, that there must have been a slow and painful process of development in his ideas. A Hebrew of the Hebrews—zealous for the traditions of the Fathers—profiting above others in the religion of his people—willing, after many years of persecution and indignity rendered at their hands, even to be accursed for their sake—he could not at once have shaken off the yoke of old ideas, or have broken irrevocably with past associations and convictions. No doubt the time came when he could write to his converts, that he counted as dross all upon which he had once valued himself; but in his progress to this point there must have been many struggles and pauses, and, doubtless, many fruitless attempts to retain something of what, in the end, he found himself compelled to relinquish. And we can see that the transformation was never complete, that the form in which he conceived the new ideas was the result of his early modes of thought, and that some even of (apparently) his most novel conceptions were only adaptations of doctrines current in the schools in which he had been trained. But if so much remained to the end, we may safely conclude that very little was changed at first; that his original views coincided with those of the church at Jerusalem at the time; that he preached Jesus as the Son of David and Saviour of Israel; and that if he preached to Gentiles, he invited them to secure the full privileges of the kingdom He was to establish by obedience to the Law.

The view we have thus taken receives strong indirect confirmation from two incidental expressions in the Epistles: "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh," &c. (2 Cor. v. 16); and, "And I, if I yet preach circumcision," &c. (Gal. v. 11). These expressions imply a change in the manner in which the Apostle conceived of the person or work of Jesus, and of the terms of admission into the Church, and in his manner also of preaching the Gospel. It is true that this inference may be explained away; but it is the natural and obvious inference to be



drawn from the language employed, and it accords with conclusions arrived at by independent lines of argument. It is in the highest degree improbable that Paul should from the very first have the views of the nature of Jesus, and of his relation to the Law, and of the terms and grounds of the admission of the Gentiles, which are set forth in the Epistles to the Galatians, Corinthians and Romans; and it would have been impossible, if he had held such views, that Peter and James, before a single uncircumcised Gentile had been admitted to baptism with the approval of the church at Jerusalem, should have sanctioned him as a preacher, or the churches in Judæa have approved of his preaching. And when, upon these grounds, we are compelled to infer that there must have been change and progress in the doctrines that he taught, phrases employed by himself which imply such a change can only be rightly interpreted in that sense. We conclude, then, that Paul visited Jerusalem for the purpose of obtaining authority from the Apostles to preach as a recognized agent of the society, and that at this time his opinions coincided with those entertained by the church of that place.

We know how difficult it must be to accept such a view. We can scarcely by any effort escape from the tendency to invest the character and position of Paul from the very first with the attributes which they possess in the culminating period of his career—the period embraced between the dispute at Antioch and the final journey to Jerusalem; where he stands alone, confronting the authority of the Apostles, if invoked on behalf of doctrines which he disapproves, denouncing the false teachers, and laying the basis of the future faith of the Church. We overlook or forget the long and toilsome ascent to this point of eminence. But a brief reflection must convince any one who is able to look at the facts with an unbiassed eye, that it is impossible he could have occupied this position from the beginning. For, even according to the orthodox view, what had he done? He had persecuted the Church with peculiar animosity, stimulating the Jewish authorities to adopt measures which they would not

otherwise have contemplated, and he had afterwards abandoned their service and joined the Church, moved to this step, as he alleged, by a vision of Jesus himself. He had then preached in Damascus in so intemperate a manner as to excite the Jews of that city to a bitter hostility to himself—a hostility which did not extend to the brethren, but might soon do so; and he repeated the same conduct and provoked the same exclusive hostility in Jerusalem. Was this a brother whom the Apostles were likely to recognize as an equal, one whose views they would adopt, or in whose prudence they could confide? Surely the very reverse was the case; and upon this view we should have to consider the obscurity which envelopes the immediately succeeding period of his life, an obscurity from which he was only drawn by the action of Barnabas in taking him to Antioch, as arising from his services having been rejected by the Apostles, and from his not having then been allowed to act in any way for the society. But certainly neither from the data furnished by the Acts, nor from an independent consideration of his position in relation to the Church, nor from anything he has himself said, could we suppose that he was regarded by others, or that he then regarded himself, as the equal of the Apostles, or that he was permitted or claimed to occupy a special sphere of action, with their sanction, but independent of their authority. And unless he had been so regarded and authorized, his doctrines must have substantially coincided with those of the church in Jerusalem.

There is nothing in this conception of his position derogatory to Paul himself, any more than it would be derogatory to Marlborough or Wellington to point out that in the earlier parts of their career they occupied subordinate offices and were compelled to obey the orders of men very inferior in capacity to themselves; or to the first Napoleon to show him dependent upon the favour of a man like Barras for his chance of command. The real glory of these men, and of Paul also, is, that they knew how to elevate themselves to a position of superiority, and that they there displayed qualities which fitted them for its occupation. It may be

said, indeed, with regard to Paul that he was inspired from the first; but it is obvious that his inspiration always manifested itself in forms conditioned by the circumstances in which he was placed, and we may therefore assume this to have been the course from the beginning. And if it should be objected that Christian humility ought to have restrained Peter and the other Apostles from claiming any superiority over Paul, it is obvious to answer, that the same humility would have prevented Paul from claiming any equality with them. And Christian humility, though it may lead individuals to postpone their personal claims, never prevents them from insisting upon their official superiority, especially in matters of doctrine and discipline.

We know nothing of the life of Paul in the interval between his interview with Peter and his settlement at Antioch; but though we cannot suppose that it was passed in inaction—for this is implicitly negatived by his statement that the churches in Judæa heard of his preaching,—we are entitled to suppose, from his immediate acceptance of the summons of Barnabas, that the results of his labours, or, it may be, their character, was not such as to satisfy himself. It is the fashion to assume that he visited the different parts of the country, preaching everywhere and founding churches, over which he exercised apostolical supervision. But this assumption is purely gratuitous, and is contradicted by his conduct. We cannot suppose that a man, who afterwards insisted so much upon his independence, would have quitted such a field of labour to become one, and that apparently the last,<sup>1</sup> among the many teachers in the church at Antioch—a church which had been already established, and in which he could neither claim exclusive authority nor freedom of individual action. Nor would Barnabas have been justified in withdrawing him from this extended sphere of action to the more restricted field furnished by Antioch itself. The impression produced by the story in the Acts, as well as that which we should derive from an independent consideration of

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiii. 1.

the circumstances, is, that Barnabas, recognizing the high qualities of Paul, seized the opportunity of removing him from a place in which these qualities found no sufficient scope, to one of wider usefulness, possibly with the permission of the Apostles; and that Paul was glad to avail himself of the opportunity, and thenceforth for a time attached himself to Barnabas, to whom he proved a useful coadjutor.

The church of Antioch, to which he was thus introduced, had apparently, under the leadership of Barnabas, attained to considerable importance. The city was the capital of Syria, the residence of the Roman Legate, and the third city in the Empire in regard to population, only Rome and Alexandria exceeding it in this respect.<sup>1</sup> It was one of the chief centres of Oriental commerce; one of the places in which the ideas as well as the commodities of the East and the West met and were exchanged. In addition to its large resident population, there was a floating multitude, attracted by various causes, and having no ties to the place but such as might arise from the circumstance of its being for the time their residence. Such cities always afforded a ready welcome to any new form of doctrine or worship, so that the fugitives from Jerusalem on their arrival in Antioch found, apparently, no difficulty in making converts. And in consequence of their success, Barnabas had been despatched from Jerusalem, as we suppose, for the purpose of organizing the church, over which he would subsequently preside; though it would seem that others were associated with him in his rule.

M. Renan has drawn a picture of the distrust and jealousy awakened in the church at Jerusalem by the news that a church had been founded in which Gentiles were included, and of the part taken by Barnabas in counteracting that jealousy and in procuring its recognition; but that picture is confessedly purely imaginary, and we are compelled to regard it as correspondingly inaccurate. There is nothing in the story as told in the Acts to

<sup>1</sup> Renan, *Les Apôtres*, and the authorities there cited. For a full description of the city, see that work and Conybeare and Howson's *St. Paul*, Vol. I. c. 4.

suggest the existence of any such feelings, and, as we conceive, nothing in the position or belief of the church to render it probable. We have already attempted to show the insufficiency of the grounds upon which M. Renan bases his conception of the character of James; and his view of the attitude of the church towards Gentile converts and Gentile churches appears principally to rest upon the assumption that the history in the Acts embraces the whole action of the society, so that nothing was done save that which has been related. Even, however, if that had been the case, and Antioch had been the only city in which a church had been established composed in large part of Gentiles, there would still be no ground for supposing that the Apostles or the brethren at Jerusalem could have received the news with any other feeling than that of satisfaction. And the appointment of some one occupying a high position in the body to take charge of the church thus established, so far from being a proof of jealousy, would be a natural and necessary proceeding, considering the importance it was almost certain to attain, and would evince the interest with which the event was regarded. For not only was it essential to provide for the due ordering of the affairs of the new society, to regulate and superintend the admission of members, and to secure the proper celebration of the commemorative feast, but it was equally necessary to have a person at the head who could exercise authority in matters of doctrine. The teaching of the church was then exclusively oral. Not merely did no portion of the New Testament exist,<sup>1</sup> but even the profession of faith to be recited by the neophyte on receiving baptism had not been committed to writing; and we may be certain that no scheme of doctrine had been. There was nothing but the living voice to which the inquirer could resort for information as to the facts upon which the new belief rested, or as to the essential points of the belief itself. It was therefore indispensable in every important church that some person should be appointed in whom the

<sup>1</sup> With the possible exception of some part of the Logia of Matthew.



Apostles could confide—some one who might not only impart accurate knowledge to those seeking admission, but might restrain the aberrations of the imperfectly instructed converts. Whatever confidence the Apostles might feel in the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit, they were obviously far too practical to trust to this alone. Their own daily experience must have shown them how ready even the most promising converts were to add something to the lessons they had been taught, or possibly to omit some of the most important elements of such teaching.<sup>1</sup> They could not, consequently, leave a church like that of Antioch without some efficient supervision, and their selection of Barnabas may be taken to evince the satisfaction with which they regarded this new development of the body, and their desire to provide effectually for its prosperity and permanence. It is possible that Barnabas did not go alone, and that at least Manaen, who must have come from Jerusalem, accompanied him in the first instance; or it may be that with the growth of the church further assistance was required. We accordingly find three “prophets and teachers” in the church besides himself, with whom Paul on his arrival was associated.

Paul appears to have resided in Antioch for some considerable period, but we are unable to say how long. We are told, however, in the Acts that his residence was, for a short time, interrupted by a visit made by Barnabas and himself to Jerusalem for the purpose of bearing to the brethren of that place the alms of the church at Antioch. This is one of the cases in which the narrative in the Acts seems to conflict with Paul’s own statements, since he not only omits all reference to this visit, but even employs language which appears to exclude the occurrence.<sup>2</sup> No one certainly, from what he has said, could suppose that any intermediate visit to Jerusalem had occurred, between the two he mentions, where, in justice to the arguments of his opponents,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 12. Corinth would not be the only church in which rationalizing members denied the possibility of a resurrection of the body.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. i. 21 to ii. 1.

it ought apparently to have been inserted. But the omission of all reference to this visit may perhaps be explained if we suppose him to have gone up merely as a companion, or even attendant, to Barnabas, to whom the care of the money and the conduct of the business was entrusted; so that he would have had no share in the counsels of the church at the time, and, possibly, would not even have been introduced to the Apostles. Paul in his letter is seemingly defending himself against the charge of having been instructed in Christian doctrine by the Twelve, and having, consequently, no right to depart from their teachings. He therefore mentions his first visit, when, presumably, he received his commission as an agent of the society, and extenuates its importance; he only saw Peter, and perhaps James, and only remained with Peter for a fortnight; but it would not be necessary for him to refer to this second visit, if he had no such intercourse with the Apostles as to suggest that he had then received their instructions. And it seems more probable that Paul should have omitted to refer to this visit, either because in the excitement of the moment he had forgotten it, or because he thought it had no bearing upon his argument, than that the authorities followed by the writer of the Acts should have contained an account of a journey that had no real existence. And there do not appear to be any adequate grounds to suppose that the writer invented it for apologetic purposes.<sup>1</sup>

At some time, but we cannot say how soon, after the return of Barnabas and Paul, it was decided by the leading members of the church at Antioch to send them upon a missionary journey.

<sup>1</sup> If there is any ground for attributing to Paul the claim subsequently put into his mouth by the author of the Acts (xxii. 17 ff.), that he was favoured with a vision in the Temple which directed him to proceed to the Gentiles, it is probably to this visit that it is to be referred. His shortly succeeding mission with Barnabas, in which he is described as being sent out by the church of Antioch under the direction of the Holy Spirit, would thus be claimed as the result of a special revelation to himself, just as in the letter to the Galatians he claims to have gone up to Jerusalem by revelation, when the Acts describes him as having been deputed, with Barnabas, by the same church.

That they should have believed themselves to be guided to this decision by the Divine Spirit was only natural under the circumstances; for there was no act of importance in which such guidance was not sought, and probably obtained, often by means of indications which we should consider trivial. The Spirit was supposed to manifest its will in various ways—known to the initiated: often by an apparently irresistible impulse in the individual seeking guidance—sometimes by the occurrence of facilities or difficulties in particular directions—sometimes by lot—and doubtless in many other modes. But to men who believed that they were special objects of Divine favour, and chosen instruments for the accomplishment of the Divine purpose, every event that occurred to them would be regarded as in some degree suggestive of the Divine will in reference to their proceedings. That these indications should for the most part coincide with their own desires and purposes, was to be expected, for these also were in a measure the work of the Spirit, and when sufficiently powerful would dispense with the necessity of further inquiries. We are not told in what manner the commands of the Spirit were conveyed upon this occasion, but we may believe that the impulse originated in some such feeling as that expressed in the saying of Jesus, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few.” The experience of the church at Antioch had probably demonstrated the accessibility of the Gentiles to the preachers of the glad tidings. And besides this, there were Jews, not indeed in every city, but abundantly scattered throughout the neighbouring countries, to whom these glad tidings had never been proclaimed, and who, considering the shortness of the time before the return of the Lord, might never hear them, unless means were taken to visit them in their separate homes. They, consequently, would pray to the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers into his harvest, and such prayers would naturally suggest the idea of corresponding action on their own part. Could not they supply the labourers for God to send? Might not Barnabas, who had been so successful in organizing and

developing the church at Antioch, and Saul, who since his arrival had proved his zeal and power in winning over converts to that church, be such? These thoughts would be likely to be suggested by the circumstances; and then there would be meetings for discussing the feasibility of the project and the means for its accomplishment, and both solitary and united prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in their deliberations; and then, possibly by the voice of one of the prophets, the decision would be announced, and would be accepted as a Divine command. After this, arrangements would have to be made for their sailing, and for the supply of funds for their support on the journey, and there then would be a final meeting for fasting and prayer, at which we learn that the two missionaries were gifted with the needful authority for the work they had to perform by the laying on of hands. The mission, however, was, as we see, composed of three persons, of whom Barnabas was the chief, Mark, we may assume, being added as a coadjutor to make up the requisite number for the initiation of new members.

Thus commissioned and authorized, Barnabas and Paul sailed from Seleucia, the port of Antioch, and crossed over to Cyprus, the birthplace of Barnabas, in which island they commenced their labours. We learn that in Salamis, the port at which they landed, they preached only in the synagogues of the Jews, and we gather that this continued to be their practice during their stay in the island, excepting in the solitary instance in which they are invited by the Roman governor to explain their doctrines before him. From this it would appear that, both in the view of the church of Antioch and in their own, the mission with which they were entrusted was directed primarily to Jews, and that as long as they were favourably received by these they did not contemplate any extension of the field of their labours, leaving to the Jewish converts the work of evangelizing their Gentile neighbours. Certainly there can be no ground for supposing that the natives of Cyprus would be less accessible to the new faith than those of Antioch or of Derbe or Lystra; and as

little can we suspect the author of the Acts of having suppressed the fact of their preaching to them.

We do not dwell on the alleged conversion of the Deputy Sergius Paulus, nor on the miracle of vengeance by which, as we are told, it was produced. We have no means of testing the truth of the account we possess by any other accounts from independent sources, and therefore we must judge of it by its intrinsic credibility, and certainly, thus judged, it has no claim to belief. Even if we were to assume that Paul, by whatever means, had produced a sudden blindness in his opponent in the presence of the Deputy, there would be no more probability that this should convince Sergius of the truth of the resurrection of Jesus, and of his being the Son of God, and of his future coming to judge the world, than that the miracle of La Salette should convince a Protestant of the truth of the dogma of the immaculate conception, or that the marvellous appearances produced by an Indian juggler should convince an English magistrate of the Avatars of Vishnu. The Romans, for the most part, had too profound a contempt for the worship and character of their Jewish and Syrian dependents, and too great an experience of their professedly magical performances, to attach any importance to one or the other. If, indeed, we were to suppose that Paul had spoken before Sergius, as he is subsequently represented as speaking at Athens, we could imagine that Sergius might listen approvingly, and might even express his belief in one Supreme God, who governed the world, and who would hereafter reward every man according to his actions. But this, after all, is mere conjecture. The incident in its present form can have no pretensions to be regarded as historical, and we must therefore be content to leave it, since we have no means of ascertaining the circumstances out of which it was developed.

With this event the writer of the Acts appears to pass from one authority to another. In the one he has previously followed, Paul, who is uniformly called Saul, occupies almost invariably an inferior position. He is received into the church of



Damascus by Ananias, who confers the Holy Ghost upon him by the laying on of hands. He is then taken up by Barnabas, who introduces him to the Apostles and persuades them to receive him, and afterwards withdraws him from his secluded sphere in Tarsus or its neighbourhood for the purpose of attaching him to the church at Antioch, in which he is named as the last of the prophets and teachers. And when the Spirit directs the setting apart of the two, Barnabas is named first, and he continues to be so until the interview with Sergius Paulus. It is noticeable, too, that in this portion of the expedition there is no hint of any dangers incurred or hostility provoked. In the other, which is now apparently adopted, Paul is invariably called by that name, and Barnabas occasionally drops out of the narrative altogether, and always is made to appear as subordinate to Paul, with two noticeable exceptions, however: once at Lystra, where, on the occasion of the miracle of healing the impotent man, he is named first in describing their protest to the people,<sup>1</sup> and where the fact of his being called Zeus, and Paul Hermes, implies not only that Paul was the chief speaker, but also that Barnabas appeared to be the leader, and Paul to speak as his mouthpiece; and again at the Council at Jerusalem, where, in describing to the Apostles and elders the results of their mission, precedence is again given to Barnabas.<sup>2</sup> The second authority appears to have been adopted in the course of describing the scene before Sergius, who is said to have sent for Barnabas and Saul for the purpose of hearing the word. To them the sorcerer Bar Jesus opposes himself, and then Saul, here first named Paul, alone takes up the word, rebukes Bar Jesus, and strikes him with blindness, thus effecting the conversion of the Deputy; and then we are told that Paul and his companions, loosing from Paphos, sailed to Perga, where Mark left them, and it is only incidentally, after their arrival at Antioch in Pisidia, that we learn that Barnabas continued to be of the party. From this point all

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiv. 14, "When the Apostles, Barnabas and Paul," &c.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xv. 12.

the real business of the mission is assigned to Paul, who delivers all the discourses and works the two notable miracles that marked the journey. And it is singular that coincident with this change we find that their mission, hitherto to all appearance so peaceful, provokes an embittered opposition from the Jews, which on more than one occasion is stated to have endangered their lives.

But it may be said that this only depicts the natural course of events—that Paul, at first the mere colleague of Barnabas, and therefore keeping discreetly in the background, naturally came to the front when they encountered opposition, and afterwards preserved the foremost place by virtue of his superior energy and ability. This may be the case; but it is doubtful if Barnabas would have acquiesced in so complete a reversal of their original position, or have subsided into such utter insignificance as upon this view would have been the case. As we have said, the notice of the scene at Lystra implies not only that his original relation to Paul continued unchanged, but also that his precedence was recognized by the people of the city. We are therefore disposed to conclude, that although Paul might have gradually taken the lead, yet that the history, as we have it, exaggerates his importance and unduly depreciates that of Barnabas. It is obvious that Barnabas had not sunk his own individuality in that of Paul, since he refused to accompany the latter when he objected to the companionship of Mark; and as up to that time they had apparently been fast friends, we may assume that Barnabas had previously been allowed a due share in the work of the mission and in the honours of its success; and also that he was always recognized as its head. Whether the account of the latter part of the journey is founded upon a description given by Paul himself at a later period of his life, or upon some original narrative by a disciple of Paul, can only be conjectured. Our own conjecture would be, that the account of the first portion is derived from notes preserved by Mark, and that of the last from those of the unnamed disciple, whoever he

might be, who supplied the place which Mark had left vacant. But, whatever may have been the source of the history, it is obvious from its character that here it must be accepted with great reserve.

According to our authority, it is at this point that the real mission to the Gentiles commences. Hitherto the two missionaries had preached only in the synagogues, and there had been no opportunity, or, it may be, no need, for preaching to Gentiles. It is here, too, that the first dissension occurs in their party; "John, whose surname was Mark," the nephew of Barnabas, who had previously accompanied them, declining to do so any further. It is natural, at first sight, to connect this separation with the prominent position assigned to Paul, and perhaps with his assumption of a higher and more authoritative share in the proceedings than Mark was disposed to concede to him. And there is nothing to contradict this impression. It may be said that, if such were the case, Barnabas also would have been involved in the dispute; but his position, and Paul's consciousness of the many kindnesses received at his hands, and perhaps also the terms upon which they were originally appointed for the work, might have kept the latter from those assertions of his own claims, and depreciation of the claims of others, which there would be no such motives to restrain in the case of Mark. We see by the letters of Paul that he was somewhat given to overlook or disparage the share which his companions had taken in their common labours,<sup>1</sup> and something of this may have been the case here. And Barnabas may have acquiesced in the separation, feeling that there would be a greater prospect of preserving the harmony of the party, if the place of Mark were supplied by some brother of lower pretensions. That he was satisfied with the sufficiency of the motives by which Mark was actuated, is plain from his wish to engage him in a similar position in the

<sup>1</sup> E. g., in his first letter to the Corinthians he claims the sole merit of their conversion, and it is only in the second that we find any acknowledgment that Silvanus and Timotheus were associated with him in the work.

next proposed journey. This forbids us to suppose that his conduct involved any dereliction of duty, but of course it may have been determined merely by considerations of personal convenience whose urgency Barnabas admitted. Whatever the motive, Mark quitted the party, charged, we may believe, with the task of despatching some other qualified brother to supply his place.

At Perga, as we suppose in consequence of the defection of Mark, which left the party without the number of members requisite in order to the due founding of a new church, they did not preach; not, however, waiting at that place, but pushing on to Antioch, in Pisidia, and there they are described as preaching in the synagogue, Paul being the spokesman. The discourse is represented as having been heard with attention, and as having stimulated many of the hearers to seek to obtain further information on the subject, but not as having provoked any opposition. It is only on the following Sabbath (Saturday) that any hostility is shown, and then it is provoked, not by the doctrines enunciated by Paul, but solely by jealousy at the interest which these doctrines had excited among the Gentile population. Upon this Paul and Barnabas, who had already, according to the story, brought the people (i.e. Gentiles) together for the purpose of addressing them, make the opposition of the Jews a ground of justification for doing what they had previously determined to do, and preach to all who are present indiscriminately, making many converts. In consequence of this conduct, the hostility of the Jews is provoked, and they succeed in exciting against the missionaries "the devout and honourable women," and the authorities of the city, and in procuring their expulsion; and they depart, shaking the dust of the city off their feet, and leaving the disciples filled with joy and the Holy Spirit!

From Antioch they proceed to Iconium, where they preach at first peacefully and successfully to both Jews and Greeks,<sup>1</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiv. 1. The context would appear to imply that this word ought to have been Grecians, Gentile proselytes of the gate, since the next verse draws a distinction between them and the Gentiles = Greeks.

organizing a church composed of both classes. Here they remain for some time; but the results of their preaching and attracting numerous converts cause bitter dissensions in the city, and lead to projects for their arrest and punishment, a knowledge of which drives them from the place. They then go on to Lystra, and here we have an account of a signal miracle wrought by Paul, the first effect of which is to induce the people to regard him and Barnabas as gods who had come down to earth in the likeness of men, and to prepare to sacrifice to them. It is impossible to say whether any fact underlies this story, or whether it is only introduced to balance the miracle attributed in Christian legend to Peter and John, to which, as we have pointed out, it bears so marked a resemblance. It is noticeable, however, that the only place in which Paul is described as having suffered any actual violence, is precisely the place in which he had wrought so notable a miracle; so that not only is the wonder ineffectual to produce a change of heart in those who witnessed its performance—it actually renders them more accessible to the persuasions of the enemies of the truth.<sup>1</sup> The very people who, under the first feeling of admiration at its performance, were ready to worship Paul as a god, are shortly afterwards so exasperated against him that they stone him and leave him for dead! Driven from Lystra by this deed of violence, they move on to Derbe, where they preach the word, and where, apparently, they are successful and unmolested. It would seem, indeed, that the hostility which had pursued them so far had, from some unexplained and unimaginable cause, worn itself out; since after the completion of their labours in that place they retrace their steps to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, the very cities from which they had been so recently driven by violence, and in all of these places they are able peacefully and without opposition to exhort the brethren, and to complete the organization of the churches!

<sup>1</sup> If we were to suppose the story to be founded on some actual occurrence, the natural conclusion would really seem to be, that the imagined miracle was a concerted imposture, whose subsequent detection had exasperated the populace against its authors.



And having done this, they pass tranquilly through Pisidia to Pamphilia, arriving at Perga, where they preach the word for the first time, and so return by way of Attalia to Antioch.

As we have said, we regard it as probable that the account of this journey may be founded upon some original notes of one of the members of the party; but these must have been freely dealt with. The speeches attributed to Paul must surely be due to the author; and if Luke were he, then they may approximately reproduce the character of his preaching and the topics upon which he was accustomed to dwell. But if so, his preaching must have been very different from what we have been accustomed to attribute to him. His speech to the Jews at Antioch is modelled, in part, upon that originally delivered by Peter to the people of Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, and in part upon that addressed by Stephen to the Sanhedrim. While, however, Peter preaches, as John had done before him, the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, and requiring that the penitents should be baptized into the name of Jesus, Paul teaches that, in Jesus, all who believe may be justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the Law of Moses. This language apparently imports a new element into the doctrine; but there was, nevertheless, a substantial agreement between the two: both preached the remission of sins; both imposed baptism upon their converts as the condition, if not the instrument, of this remission; and both required a profession of a belief in Jesus as the Christ as an essential preliminary to baptism. The difference indicated was no doubt capable of leading to fundamental changes when conclusions were drawn out from the terms employed, and not from the conceptions they originally represented; but we may be sure that no such consequences were contemplated by the writer. He simply employs what he understood to be Paul's habitual phraseology, without a thought beyond; as is clear from the circumstance that he never represents Paul as dwelling upon this aspect of doctrine.

In tone the speech far more nearly resembles that attributed

to Stephen. Peter, while addressing the very persons who shortly before had clamoured for the death of Jesus, speaks apparently in full confidence that they will recognize him as the Messiah; while Paul, though exculpating his audience from all share in that death, which he attributes exclusively to the Jews of Jerusalem and their rulers (acting, it is said, through ignorance), yet appears to anticipate that they will reject his message, and finishes his discourse with words of menace—conduct at variance with his habitual courtesy, and with his method of presenting his peculiar views in the form least likely to repel or to wound those whom he addressed. To the Gentiles, on the only occasion on which his words have been reported, at Lystra, he does not preach Jesus at all, but sets forth the living God who made the heavens and the earth, and the sea and all things therein, and who, though He had suffered the nations to walk in their own ways, yet had not left Himself without witness among them in that He had given them rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with joy and gladness. True, this is not presented to us as being the whole of what he taught, and obviously it could not have been. But it serves to show the imperfection of the record, and therefore the necessary uncertainty of any attempt to make it the basis of a complete or accurate history. Combining this account with the statement made by Paul in his letter to the Galatians, we may assume that during this journey Barnabas and himself had preached to the Gentiles with much success, and had proved themselves so well qualified for the work, as to induce the Apostles, or the chief among them, to invest them at a later period with a special authority to continue their labours. Paul, indeed, appears to claim the merit of this success exclusively to himself, and does not suggest that Barnabas could pretend to any share in the result, or that he possessed any aptitude for the work. And in this he seems to be borne out by the story in the Acts. But considering the occasion of the letter, and the spirit in which it is written, this silence on the part of Paul cannot outweigh the practical proof

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to the contrary furnished by the admission that the mission to the Gentiles was confided to Barnabas jointly with himself, since this implies that the Apostles recognized, probably his equal, certainly his efficient, and possibly even his superior, share in their common labours.

Having returned to Antioch, the two missionaries reported to the church that had sent them the result of their mission, and then resumed "for a long time" the performance of their habitual duties in that place—duties which they continued to discharge until circumstances arose which required the decision of the Apostles and the elders of the mother church.

## CHAPTER IV.

### COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM AND DEPARTURE OF PAUL AND SILAS FROM ANTIOCH.

Questions connected with admission of Gentiles—Their position probably that of proselytes of the gate—Difference of opinion among Jews as to necessity of circumcision—Required at Antioch by stricter members—Deputation to Jerusalem—Implies authority of Apostles and Presbyters of that church—Statement in Acts of the decision of the question apparently confirmed by subsequent history—Different view resulting from letters of Paul—Contrast between description of Council in Acts and in letter to Galatians—That in Acts probably substantially accurate—Deductions to be made from account given by Paul on account of circumstances under which it was written—Titus—Must have been circumcised—Recognition of Barnabas and Paul as missionaries to Gentiles—Return to Antioch—Dispute with Barnabas—Separation—Silas associated with Paul—Timothy taken into party after having been circumcised—Primary object of mission to regulate affairs of churches already founded in accordance with decrees of Council—Journey through Asia Minor to Troad.

THE first intimation of any serious difference of opinion in the Church in connection with the question of circumcision, is after the return of Paul and Barnabas from their missionary journey; for the momentary dissatisfaction described as having been caused by the conduct of Peter was allayed almost as soon as it was excited. But it is difficult not to suppose that the question had been previously raised, since it was to a certain extent involved in the very act of admitting Gentiles. Possibly, however, it was in Antioch that it first assumed sufficient importance to demand a formal solution. The believers in Jesus were in their origin a Jewish sect, and none but Jews were originally admitted as members. It was therefore a matter of course that whenever the Gospel should be preached to Gentiles, their position in relation to the new sect should be similar to that which Gentiles in

general occupied in relation to Judaism—rather we should say, the same; for the new faith was at first preached as Judaism. Certain privileges were obtained by admission into the society and the observance of the prescribed abstinences, but full participation in the benefits of the covenant could only be acquired by obedience to the Law, and, in particular, by being circumcised. But this would involve much difference of opinion. There would be some, like the Ananias mentioned by Josephus,<sup>1</sup> who would teach that circumcision was not requisite, and would even dissuade their converts from submitting to the rite; and others, doubtless the majority, who, relying upon the specific commandments of the Law, insisted upon its necessity. And as the sect of the Christians differed from other Jewish sects<sup>2</sup> in making the partaking of a common meal the token of membership, the latter would have a ground for their insistence which did not exist in the case of ordinary proselytes. It might, therefore, be regarded as inevitable that the leaders of the Church should be called upon to lay down some definite rule upon the subject.

The whole matter, as it is brought before us, is full of difficulty—although a difficulty which is almost entirely caused by the writings of Paul. According to the Acts of the Apostles, we should infer that in Antioch probably the majority, and possibly even the whole of the Gentile converts, had been admitted by baptism only, and that some of the stricter members of the body, on their arrival from Jerusalem, becoming aware of this fact, had attempted to impose circumcision either as a condition of membership, or as necessary to a complete share in the blessings of the coming kingdom; fortifying themselves by a reference to the practice of the mother church, and possibly invoking the authority of the Apostles. We are then told that upon this it was determined to send a deputation to Jerusalem to protest against the enforcement of such a rule, and to obtain the assent of the

<sup>1</sup> Ant. xx. ii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Excepting the Essenes, who, however, apparently admitted none but Jews or those circumcised.



church to its non-observance; and that on the arrival of the deputation a Council was held, at which it was determined by the Apostles and elders to impose no other obligations upon Gentile converts but those observed by proselytes of the gate,—to abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication,—and that this decree thereafter became the universal law of the Church. And we should be disposed at first sight to accept this account as substantially true, because, excepting in the Pauline Epistles, we do not find any reference in early Christian literature to any controversy on the subject. There are indications, no doubt, of dissensions in the Church, but these have no reference to the question of the observance of the Law. In the Revelations we read of persons who say that they are Apostles and are not, and that they are Jews and are not, and who teach to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication, i.e. to violate the decree of the Council; and in Justin we find a denunciation of those who permit the eating of meats offered to idols. But nowhere is there a hint of the existence of any question as to the observance of the Jewish Law, or any complaint that Gentiles are allowed to violate its precepts; or, on the other hand, any protest against its enforced observance, or any expression of satisfaction at being free from the yoke. And we should imagine that, unless the question had from the first been settled in favour of non-observance, there must have been some indications of the struggle by which the ultimate relief of the Gentiles from the claims of the Law had been acquired.

When, however, we turn to the letters of Paul, and especially to that addressed to the churches of Galatia, we appear to find evidences of a state of things completely inconsistent with the picture we had thus formed, and, especially, we should be disposed to regard the whole story of the Council and consequent decree as a fabrication. In these letters everything at first revolves round Paul himself, and afterwards it seems as though both parties were alike ignorant of any such settlement as

described in the Acts: the one insisting upon the necessity of circumcision, and the other setting at naught the prohibition against eating things offered to idols. And we must perforce consider the evidence thus furnished, for it is impossible to suppose that Paul invented the incidents which give occasion to his letters. With regard to the supposed attempt to impose the Jewish Law, we may reserve its discussion until we reach that period in the career of Paul in which the question emerges; but we must now examine what regards the Council at Jerusalem.

If we were to suppose that the author of the Acts had seen the Epistle to the Galatians, and had desired to contradict the statement there made in its essential portions, we shall see that he could scarcely have effected his purpose more completely. Or, on the other hand, if we were to suppose that a similar account to that given in the Acts had been current in the Church when the Epistle was written, we shall see that Paul's own statement appears directed almost expressly against such a representation of his position and conduct. In the Acts, Paul is described as having been sent as one of a deputation from the church of Antioch, of which Barnabas would appear to have been the chief,<sup>1</sup> in order to obtain the decision of the Apostles and elders at Jerusalem; in the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul goes up, indeed, with Barnabas, but he goes up by revelation, and he takes Titus with himself. In the Acts, there is a meeting of the Apostles and elders for the purpose of deciding the question submitted to them, at which Barnabas and Paul are not called upon to speak until after Peter has claimed in their presence to have been the first instrument of admitting Gentiles to the privilege of membership by baptism only; and when they do speak they take no part in the discussion or in the decision, but merely relate to the assembly the success of their preaching among the Gentiles, and the signs and wonders by which it had been accompanied; in the Epistle, there is no hint of any such meet-

ing, but Paul declares privately to the three "pillars" of the Church the Gospel that he preaches among the Gentiles; and they recognize his especial gifts in that respect as contrasted with Peter's especial gifts towards the circumcision. In the Acts, the Council at Jerusalem decides that Gentiles are not under any obligation to be circumcised and keep the Law, but only to observe the abstinences required of proselytes of the gate, and they send back a letter to this effect by Barnabas and Paul,<sup>1</sup> and send also two delegates from their own body to express more fully the nature of their decision; in the Epistle, those who seemed to be somewhat added nothing to Paul in conference, but, on the contrary, they confided to himself and Barnabas the whole Gentile world as their field, reserving the circumcision to themselves. In the one, Paul is a mere member of a deputation, having no especial function, and occupying throughout a subordinate position, and the question affects the obligations of the members of a church in which he had taught, but which he had no share in founding, though, of course, affecting Gentile converts everywhere, and his opinion on the subject is neither asked nor given; in the other, he is the central figure, independent of the church at Antioch, independent of the Twelve, asserting his equality with them, and procuring its complete recognition; there is no question of the obligations imposed upon Gentile converts, but only of the doctrines taught by himself, which he communicates privately to the three leaders, and which they sanction. Obviously, therefore, either one account or the other falsifies the true character of the transaction.

Assuming, with orthodox critics, that everything took place which both parties describe, we must attribute to Paul the deliberate—or perhaps not the deliberate, for he is writing under the influence of strong feelings of anger which might exclude deliberation—but the actual suppression of facts which in the interests of truth it was his duty to describe. He had recognized the right and the competency of the Apostles and elders

<sup>1</sup> Acts xv. 25.

of the church at Jerusalem to decide the question of the liability of Gentiles to keep the Law, for he had been one of those who had invoked their decision; and while thus recognizing their superiority he could not at the same time have asserted his own equality. If he had made such a private communication of doctrine to the three chief among them as he alleges, it must have been only that his views might be corrected if unsound, and sanctioned if true; and the circumstance that they recognized Barnabas and himself is of itself a proof that there was nothing in the Gospel thus communicated inconsistent with the views entertained by the Church. And, on the other hand, if we suppose the author of the Acts to have been Luke, he could scarcely have been ignorant of the facts related by Paul, and he cannot in that case be wholly acquitted of dishonesty, since he has kept out of sight just those incidents to which the latter attached especial importance, and has so framed his history as to appear to exclude them. If we may suppose that he was some nameless Christian of the next generation, who collected the traditions of the Church and such documents as might be still available, his silence on these points is easily explained, since the records of the Council would of course only embrace the public proceedings, and he would experience an almost insurmountable difficulty in interweaving with these Paul's own notices—supposing him to be acquainted with the Epistle to the Galatians, which he might not have been.

The first impression produced by the two descriptions would probably, in the minds of the great majority, be favourable to that of Paul. The circumstance that he is speaking of matters peculiarly within his own personal knowledge, the apparent frankness and absence of all reserve or after-thought, the value necessarily attached to statements made by an Apostle, and his solemn assertion of their truth under the sanction of an oath, almost inevitably dispose the reader to adopt his version of the transaction. But it may be a question whether a more careful examination of the circumstances does not conduct to a different

conclusion. We must remember that Paul is stating his own case, in the absence of James and the rest, and that he is writing under the influence of strong feeling, and, probably, in the midst of prolonged and bitter controversies connected with this very subject. It is not necessary to point out the influence which strong feeling of any kind has upon the memory and the judgment; how it brings into prominence those incidents which harmonize with and support the feeling, and shapes and colours them in accordance with its requirements; how it suppresses or extenuates all that might have an opposite tendency; and how ready it is to draw unqualified conclusions from wholly inadequate premises. We may, therefore, be certain that the actual course of the occurrences in Jerusalem was very different from the form which it assumed in the mind of Paul when writing this letter. We cannot suppose that he either invents or consciously misrepresents any incident, but that in his own mind he has inverted their relative importance. Nothing, for instance, is more probable than that, in view of the missionary tour of Barnabas and himself, they should have been admitted to the society of, presumably, the three leading Apostles, and that there they should have described their course of procedure and the methods they had found most effectual in presenting the truth to their Gentile auditors. The report made to the meeting must necessarily have been general, and the chiefs of the society might naturally ask for fuller details—might even require them to be furnished, in order that they might pronounce an opinion upon them. It would be natural also that Paul should attach importance to such an interview, which distinguished Barnabas and himself from the rest of the deputation, and afforded him an opportunity of obtaining the approval of the chief Apostles to the methods he had employed. We may believe also that the three sanctioned his further labours, not only because of his own statement to that effect, but also because on his next journey he is accompanied by one of the two brethren whom the Apostles and elders had chosen as their representatives to the church at



Antioch, so that Paul would be justified in his statements so far as the actual facts were concerned.

But we may be quite certain also, that whatever the Apostles might have done, they did not dream of recognizing his official equality with themselves, or of authorizing any independent mission on his part. And we may doubt whether at the time Paul so understood them. Rather we may be sure that he could not have done so. Neither does his language necessarily imply this; though we, associating it with his subsequent claims, naturally understand it in this sense. On the contrary, the phrase, "lest by any means I had run or should run in vain," implies an admission of their right to pronounce upon the character of his preaching; and their giving the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and himself that they should go to the Gentiles, does not involve anything more than a recognition of their fitness for the task, and an approval of the conduct of the church of Antioch in having sent them. From this point of view, Paul might regard the occurrence of the Council and the deliberations of the Apostles and elders as immaterial. What he was chiefly concerned to show was, that the Gospel he preached had been framed in his own mind before his interview with the heads of the church, and that his mission to the Gentiles had received their sanction. His omission, consequently, of all reference to the circumstances detailed in the Acts—the deputation, the Council, the decree, and the letter to the church at Antioch—does not entitle us to regard them as fabrications; scarcely, indeed, throws any doubt upon them. And if it should be said that the account of the decree is contradicted by the conduct of the Judaizing teachers in Galatia, and even by that of Peter and James themselves, it must be remembered that it is one thing to lay down a rule of peace for the purpose of harmonizing two parties, and another to secure the acquiescence of the extreme members of those parties in its observance; and that the decree itself, though declaring that the Gentiles were not obliged to obey the Law, did not forbid its observance to those

who wished to attain a higher degree of perfection, while it had no reference whatever to the obligation of Jews to continued obedience.

We may then accept the narrative in the Acts as probably accurate in substance. We can well understand that there should be members of the sect who considered that those who were to be admitted into the privileges of the kingdom which the son of David was to found were debtors to keep the whole Law, and who might insist that no one could be secure of an entrance into that kingdom who did not thus qualify himself. Such men, on arriving in Antioch, where there was a large and flourishing church in which this rule was systematically violated, would feel themselves impelled to insist upon its observance. This teaching, however, would excite great dissatisfaction, and it would be felt that any attempt to impose the rite of circumcision would drive from the church numbers who had been already admitted, as well as repel nearly all those who were seeking admission. But in the actual state of the church, if this condition were imposed by the Apostles, it must be fulfilled, whatever might be the consequences. It was, therefore, needful to represent the circumstances to them, and, if possible, to procure their sanction to the existing practice. The most effectual mode of making these representations would be to despatch a deputation, of which Barnabas and Paul would, as a matter of course, be members, and probably leaders. They had already proved the readiness of the Gentiles to embrace the faith and the extent of the field thus opened, and they also could point out how great an obstacle would be raised to the spread of the society if this condition were imposed. And we can well believe that their representations would be successful, and that it should be decided to admit members by baptism without requiring anything more of them than was already required in the case of proselytes of the gate. We may, indeed, suspect that in the speeches attributed to Peter and James, the author has drawn freely upon his imagination, but we certainly do not seem to be justified in accusing him

of such wholesale fabrication as would be implied in the suggestion that all the incidents connected with the Council are due to his invention. And the whole subsequent history of the Church, with the single, apparent, exception of the circumstances referred to in the Epistle to the Galatians, appears to be such as might be expected if this rule had been laid down in the earliest days.

While, however, accepting the story in the Acts as correct, in so far as the general results are concerned, it is obvious that this does not entitle us to regard it as complete. We may believe that the discussions were less peaceful than is represented, for those whose demands had provoked this appeal to the parent society were not likely to acquiesce in the final decision without some protest. But even they would be brought to feel that the absolute enforcement of the claims of their Law would be fatal to the progress of the Church, and though some might be willing to accept this consequence rather than abandon their principles, their number would probably be but small, and they would be overborne by the voice of the majority. And there were two considerations that might be relied upon to reconcile all, or nearly all, to the proposed concession: the one, that, in spite of the seeming equality recognized by the concession, their own essential superiority, founded upon their obedience to the Law, would remain unaffected; and the other, that it would be open to them to urge this obedience upon Gentile converts as a counsel of perfection. But, in spite of these considerations, there must have been great difficulty, and much careful management would have been required, before anything approaching to an unanimous ratification of the decision could be procured. And when this had been done, it would be only the more emphatically declared that the freedom conceded to Gentiles did not imply any the slightest derogation of the claims of the Law upon Jews. Possibly, too, the compelled yielding upon this point would make the minority doubly watchful against any laxity of practice among their own countrymen, and more than ever rigid in insisting upon its abandonment.

So far we are only dealing with probabilities, which, however, appear fully to warrant our conclusions. But our belief that the story is incomplete does not rest upon these, since we can see that the author has omitted one incident of high importance for the due understanding of Paul's character and position, and of which, considering the notoriety apparently attaching to it, we cannot believe him to have been ignorant—the introduction of Titus, and the consequent demand that he should be circumcised. It was to be expected, perhaps, considering the obvious purpose of the work, that this incident should be passed over, for under any aspect it must be regarded as in some degree derogatory to the actors; but this omission, and the obscure allusions of Paul to the subject, render the circumstances somewhat unintelligible. It appears singular that, just when the society had agreed to waive the enforcement of the rite of circumcision in the case of Gentile converts, they should have attempted to compel it in this particular instance, and it is difficult to assign a motive for the conduct of Barnabas and Paul (for we can scarcely assume the former to have been ignorant of the circumstance) in concealing the fact that Titus was not circumcised, for this implies that they must have introduced him among the brethren as though he had been. The concealment of the truth, therefore, was in this case equivalent to the assertion of a falsehood,—conduct we should be reluctant to attribute to them, but which seems to be the sole conclusion we can draw from Paul's statement, since it was only by the intrusion of false brethren as spies upon their privacy that the actual fact was discovered. Had it not been for this, Titus would have left Jerusalem, having, while there, lived among the Jewish brethren as truly one of themselves. But what could have been the motive for this simulation? Was it that, in the first instance, Titus had been joined to the party as a promising convert, without considering the offence that might be given to the stricter brethren at Jerusalem, and that on becoming aware of this danger it was thought better to keep

silence on the subject and run the risk of detection, rather than send him back? It is possible that Barnabas and Paul, living in the freer atmosphere of Antioch, where they had been accustomed to consort familiarly with Gentile brethren, did not realize the intense feeling on the subject which they found prevailing in Jerusalem, and shrank from an avowal of the truth when they discovered what that avowal would involve. If so, it would be inevitable that this apparent assumption on their part to act as though the freedom they were then soliciting had been actually conceded, would be warmly resented by those who resisted, and would even be reproved by those who were prepared to grant the concession. But, after all, we seem to be able to say no more than that Titus was one of the party seemingly in special attendance upon Paul; that the fact of his being uncircumcised was concealed from the brethren at Jerusalem, but was nevertheless detected; and that then his circumcision was demanded. That this demand should be enforced was inevitable, for Barnabas and Paul by their suppression of the truth had deprived themselves of the only ground upon which it could be resisted. By allowing him to be introduced in an assumed character, they had conceded that this was the character he ought to possess. Had they taken their stand upon Christian freedom, and the essential equality of Gentile and Jew in the sight of Jehovah, they would have proclaimed the fact from the beginning, and no spying of false brethren would have been needed for its discovery. But they had shut themselves out from this ground of resistance, and none other could be available; however humiliating the concession, it was consequently inevitable.

That much angry feeling was excited appears well nigh certain. Barnabas and Paul could not but feel that they had lowered themselves in the estimation of the brethren by their simulation, and must have been annoyed by its exposure. And those who had discovered the truth, and all who agreed with them—the whole Church, we may say—must have been indignant at



the attempt. How strongly Paul felt on this matter, is shown by the terms in which he refers to the subject several years afterwards. Those who detected the fact were false brethren surreptitiously introduced—spies upon their freedom. And it is obvious that these men would have retorted such language with equal vehemence, and with at least equal truth. And yet, after all, it might be that the incident passed over at the time with comparative tranquillity, that no objection was offered to the performance of the rite when the discovery was made, and that explanations and apologies were tendered to the Apostles and brethren, which averted any public display of the indignation the act itself was calculated to provoke. It is possible, therefore, that the language in which Paul afterwards referred to the subject might be due, not so much to the persistence of an original feeling of bitterness, as to the circumstances in which he was writing, and the use made of the concession by his opponents; and, probably, the latter is the case. Paul would not diminish the value of an acquiescence yielded for the sake of peace by showing that it was performed reluctantly, and only in obedience to superior force. He would rather seek to enhance its merit by exhibiting a willingness that went along with, or even outran, the demand. And the recognition of himself and Barnabas as agents for the evangelization of the Gentiles which he claims, and which is implicitly corroborated by the history, could hardly have been obtained, had they not shown their readiness to submit to the authority of the Apostles in this respect. We may, therefore, perhaps, infer, that though germs of suspicion against Paul were then implanted in the minds of some of the brethren, which bore fruit in after years, and though Paul himself retained an unfriendly feeling towards those who had placed him in what he would regard as an ignominious position, yet that there was no open interruption of the harmony of the church.

This incident, however, would be a mere episode in the proceedings of the deputation, and it is probable that it occurred very shortly after its arrival in Jerusalem. Rumours would be

almost sure to arise in Antioch itself under the circumstances, as to the supposed fact that one of the party was not circumcised, and the stricter members would warn their brethren at home to be on their guard. It did not prevent, though possibly it might impede, the settlement of the question, and the deputies were enabled to return to Antioch, having secured the sanction of the Apostles and of the mother church to the admission of Gentiles by baptism merely, and having thus laid a basis for the indefinite extension of the society. And Paul had obtained the approval of the Apostles, or rather of the three chief among them, to the doctrines he then taught, and their recognition of himself as a fit agent for the work of preaching among the Gentiles. The deputation was accompanied by delegates from Jerusalem, one of whom, Silvanus or Silas, was afterwards a companion of Paul, associated with him in his second missionary expedition, and sharing with him in the honour of first introducing the Gospel into Macedonia and Achaia. These delegates were sent presumably to regulate more completely various details, and to supervise, perhaps to modify, the organization of the church, as well as to explain the true meaning of the resolution of the Council and the conduct it prescribed. Their appointment may be taken as an indication that the Apostles, whatever confidence they might repose in Barnabas and Paul, felt that their authority needed to be supplemented, or, it may be, controlled. But that there was a substantial harmony between the views of these delegates and of Paul, is shown by the circumstance that when a difference of opinion separated him from Barnabas, and rendered it impossible that the two should be again associated in their missionary labours, Silas consented to supply the place which was thus left vacant.

Again, after his return to Antioch, Paul resumed his position in that church. Judas and Silas, the two delegates from Jerusalem, also preached there, and the latter was so well satisfied with Antioch as a field of labour, and with the openings it presented for further usefulness, that he decided to remain behind

when his companion returned to Jerusalem. After some time, Paul, we are told, proposed to Barnabas to re-visit the churches they had founded, probably having become impatient of the narrow field to which he was confined, and feeling that the proposed tour would only be the prelude to wider labours in new and perhaps more promising quarters. Barnabas, we learn, accepted the proposal, but claimed the right, perhaps as leader, of naming the third brother who was to accompany them, and he proposed to take with him his nephew Mark, who had been their companion on their former visit to Cyprus. Paul, apparently, did not object to the claim, but to the individual, arguing that one who had deserted them when they were about to enter upon the untried and dangerous portion of their journey, could not be trusted in view of the yet greater dangers which the contemplated extension of their labours might be expected to involve; or perhaps simply on the ground that, having once turned back from the work he had undertaken, he had proved his unworthiness. Possibly, at the bottom of these objections, there was some personal feeling known to Barnabas, who was satisfied with the previous conduct of Mark. At any rate, he declined to yield to these considerations, and the result was a dispute which led to the separation of the two. Barnabas, taking Mark with him, proceeded to Cyprus, leaving Paul at Antioch.

From this time Barnabas disappears from the history. He is merely mentioned on more than one occasion by Paul in his subsequent letters,—once<sup>1</sup> in a manner which appears to imply his continued missionary activity. Of his labours, his sufferings, and his successes, no record remains; but we are not therefore entitled to suppose that they were either few or insignificant. We see how influential a position he had secured at an early period in the life of the society—that he was selected as the first head of the church at Antioch, which gathered consistency and strength under his supervision, and that he was the leader of the first systematic mission to the Gentiles. And we have

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 6.

no right to suppose that his exertions were less unwearied or less fruitful, after his separation from Paul, than they had been previously. But he lacked the gift of eloquence in writing,<sup>1</sup> and hence he never acquired that importance in the history of the Church that belonged to Paul, and he owes his place in that history almost entirely to his connection with his greater colleague. We need not suppose that any permanent diminution of their friendship resulted from the dispute at this time, though the wide divergence of their future course, and, probably, the different view which they took of the obligation of the Law upon themselves and Jewish brethren, would prevent any resumption of their old habits of familiar intercourse. But Paul must always have remembered, and we may believe was always ready to acknowledge, the kindness he had received from Barnabas; and Barnabas would look with gratification, although not always unmixed with anxiety, upon the success that attended the preaching of the word by one whom he had introduced to that field of labour. Henceforth, however, he is to us only one of the many nameless agents who, in connection with the church at Jerusalem and in subordination to the Apostles, was engaged in the work of preaching to the Gentile world Jesus whom God had raised from the dead, and who was about to return to the earth to establish his kingdom in peace and righteousness.

After the departure of Barnabas, it became necessary to find some other colleague to be associated with Paul, or possibly some leading brother with whom Paul was to be associated, and Silas was selected for the purpose. On this, as on the former occasion, the mission was commended by the brethren to the grace of God, implying that the two went forth, not as individual adventurers, but as delegates from the Church. It is true that the author appears to represent the mission as the work of Paul alone. He chooses Silas as his companion, and he only is included in the

<sup>1</sup> This would not be the case if we could suppose, with M. Renan, that he was the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews; but it appears impossible to accept this view, if only on the ground that from his position in the Church he might have been expected to put his name at the head.

recommendation of the brethren. But the latter is impossible ; and it is very difficult to suppose that in so short a time the relative positions of the two could have been so completely inverted as that Silas, who had been despatched by the church of Jerusalem to represent its authority to that of Antioch, should have sunk into the mere satellite of Paul. And we shall see subsequently that the story appears implicitly to negative such a supposition. This representation, however, illustrates the increasing tendency of the writer to aggrandize the importance of the share taken by Paul in the work of preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles. The two did not take with them, on leaving Antioch, any colleague of inferior rank ; and hence we may suppose that Paul had in his own mind selected Timothy as a suitable person for that office, and that Silas had acquiesced in the selection. This, consequently, may have been one of the reasons which induced Paul to object to the companionship of Mark. As Barnabas had already sailed to Cyprus, it was no longer necessary for them to visit the churches founded in that island, and they accordingly proceeded by land through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

It is obvious that their journey was primarily a tour of inspection. They were to visit all the churches which had been established during the previous expedition for the purpose of investigating their progress and condition. For it must have been a recognized part of the duty of the Church to send from time to time qualified brethren, to the smaller societies originally founded by its instrumentality, in order to regulate their affairs ; perhaps to admit new members, and certainly to examine into matters of doctrine and discipline, so that they might be guarded against the various errors that were from the first ready to corrupt the faith. It would have argued a great want of watchfulness or of foresight to have founded isolated churches in the midst of Gentile populations, and then to have left them exposed to the various influences that might alloy the doctrines they had received, or might lead them into irregularities of conduct, with-



out some habitual supervision. It would be often impossible to establish a qualified brother in every separate church, and there would, consequently, be all the more need to arrange for periodical visitations which might supply the want of such a head. For it must be remembered, not merely was there at the time no authorized scheme of doctrine to which the local leaders could refer for guidance, but that these new converts were not like Jews trained in the Law from their infancy, until its observance had become a second nature, but men who had grown up in the licence permitted by the religions of their country, familiar with idol-worship and with the lower conceptions of God which that worship implied, and therefore always ready, when the fervour of their original conversion had abated, to fall back into their old ideas and habits.

On their arrival at Lystra, Paul and Silas, we are told, received into their party Timothy, the son of a woman who was a Jewess and a believer, and of a Greek father. "Him would Paul have to go forth with him, and he took and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek." Viewing this circumstance in the light of Paul's opinions, as expressed in his letter to the Galatians, and of the account he there gives of his dispute with Peter and the Jews at Antioch, it would at first sight appear impossible that he could have performed such an act; but this difficulty probably arises from our anticipating the progress of his opinions, and not sufficiently considering the circumstances in which he was placed. It was not only that, as we have suggested, he might have consented without a protest to the circumcision of Titus, so that now, being accompanied by a brother who had witnessed and approved of that concession, he could raise no objection on the ground of principle to the corresponding act in respect of Timothy—nor that Timothy, who was half a Jew by birth and well known to be such, would be regarded by all the Jews whom they might encounter as under an obligation to submit to the rite—but that Paul had just before recog-

nized the authority of the Apostles and church at Jerusalem, and was at this time an agent of the church at Antioch, and therefore, in some respects at least, bound to conform to such regulations as they might impose. Timothy was not, we may be sure, now joined to the church for the first time. He must have been already baptized; so that the occasion for his circumcision was not his entrance into the society, but, apparently, his being appointed to an office, one essential function of which was taking a part in the establishment of new churches; for which, presumably, three persons at least would be needed. And as during the whole of this journey Paul and Silas preached in the first instance to Jews, and were seemingly successful in almost every instance in winning some converts from among them, it would be necessary, having regard to their known susceptibilities, that all the persons by whom they were initiated should be Jews also, or, at the least, proselytes of righteousness. It was not, therefore, merely for the Jews in those parts that the rite was performed, though it would, of course, be important not to offend their prejudices where that could be avoided. It was for the sake of the Jewish members of the churches which the deputation would visit, who would be scandalized by seeing a person uncircumcised taking a part in the inspection and regulation of those churches; and yet, more probably, for the sake of those Jews to whom they might preach Christ as the Messiah in the various countries they hoped to visit. And if, as is probable, both Silas and the brethren at Antioch had been made aware that Paul proposed to take Timothy into the party, it would have been a matter of course that they should have required him to be circumcised as a condition of their assent to the proposal.

These views may be rejected as unauthorized, and it must be conceded that they do not appear upon the face of the narrative. But even from the point of view of those who accept most fully Paul's own assertions as to his independence and originality, there seems to be no sufficient ground for rejecting the incident,

for he might well be anxious to remove the pretext for opposition to his preaching that would be afforded to the Jews by an open defiance of their prejudices in this particular, in a matter which in his calmer moods he regarded as unessential. And allowance should also be made for the fluctuations of sentiment which make the same act appear in a very different light according to the point of view from which it is at the moment regarded. And if it is said that it is a part of the design of the author of the Acts to represent Paul as recognizing the authority of the Law at the very moment when, from his own statements, we should suppose him to be protesting against it, and that he would not scruple to invent incidents for the purpose; it must be remembered that, according to Paul himself, there was one side of his conduct which justified such a representation, and that, consequently, it may be, the writer has only selected that side, keeping the other out of sight.

Accompanied by Timothy, Paul and Silas proceeded to visit the churches of the district—those, we may presume, that had been founded by Barnabas and Paul during the previous visit; after having done this, we should suppose that they proceeded to preach the word for the first time in Phrygia and Galatia, establishing the churches which were afterwards addressed by Paul in his letter to the Galatians. There is here, however, a great ambiguity in the language employed,<sup>1</sup> for, though appearing more naturally to bear the meaning we have thus attributed to it, yet it may imply that the churches visited and confirmed in the faith by them, and to which they delivered the decrees of the Apostles, were situated in Phrygia and Galatia; and that they were only about to break new ground at first in Asia and afterwards in Bithynia, where they encountered such obstacles as they understood to indicate that the Divine Spirit forbade them to proceed in either of those directions. In support of the latter interpretation may be mentioned the prominence given to Barnabas in the Epistle to the Galatians,<sup>2</sup> which is more naturally

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvi. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. ii. 1, 9, 13.

accounted for by assuming that he had been associated with Paul in preaching the Gospel to them;<sup>1</sup> and the fact stated by M. Renan, that the cities visited by Barnabas and Paul were situated in the Roman province of Galatia. The uncertainty of the phrase may, probably, be taken to show that there were no existing records of this part of the journey of which the writer could avail himself; but it appears more probable that he distinguished in his own mind between Pamphylia, Pisidia, and Lycaonia, where he had already described Paul as having preached in the previous journey, and Phrygia and Galatia, which he now visits. And though the fact that the cities of Lycaonia were situated in the province of Galatia might justify Paul in addressing the churches there founded, as in Galatia, yet that, under the circumstances, would not be natural; for he had nothing to do with these State organizations. And it is quite clear that the author of the Acts is fully aware of the old territorial distinctions, and recognizes their existence; and if he were so, much more would Paul have been. So that we can scarcely suppose that the one would employ the word Galatia to indicate the very places he had formerly described as being in Lycaonia, or that the other would select a term which had reference to the relation of his converts to the administration of the Government, and not to their own immediate and familiar connections. However this may be, we learn that, baffled in their attempts to proceed in other directions, and turning their faces towards Greece, they arrived at Troas, and that there Paul was favoured by a vision which decided them to proceed to Macedonia; accompanied for the first time by a follower whose original record of the journey is inwoven into the framework of the history, and who on that account has been assumed to be its author.

<sup>1</sup> And yet he is mentioned by name to the Corinthians, when he had not apparently preached in Corinth.

## CHAPTER V.

### PAUL AND SILAS IN EUROPE.

Entry into Macedonia—Stay at Philippi—Conversion of Lydia—Exorcism and accusation before magistrate—Probable grounds of imprisonment—Release from prison and departure from Philippi—Missionaries pass on to Thessalonica—Mission to “Jews first”—Baptism of jailer answers to baptism of Ethiopian courtier by Philip—Church of Thessalonica—Difficulties arising from letters to Thessalonians as compared with story in Acts—Suggested explanation—Berea—Grounds of hostility of Jews—Athens—Nature of Paul’s preaching there—Corinth—Paul does not separate from Jews till after arrival of Silas—Necessity of his co-operation—Silas probably head of mission—Facilities for preaching the Gospel in Corinth—Letters to Thessalonians show nature of Paul’s teaching at Corinth—Summary of his doctrines—How afterwards modified—Accusation before Gallio—Nature of charge—Conduct of Gallio—Paul decides to remain at Corinth—This stay probably inconsistent with plan of mission, leading to separation from Silas—Paul leaves Corinth for Jerusalem in order to fulfilment of vow.

WITH Paul’s visit to Europe he appears to enter upon a new phase in his career, and to take the first step towards that complete independence which he afterwards assumed. In the former mission with Barnabas he is represented as having ultimately occupied the leading position in fact, and we may believe that such was likely to be the case; but the official relation of the two would remain unaltered—Barnabas would be the head of the party, and Paul merely an efficient and zealous coadjutor. And in the early part of this journey also it is not improbable that precedence would have been given to Silas, whose rank in the Church is shown to have been superior to his own. During that time also Paul is building upon foundations already laid—occupied rather in regulating and confirming churches previously established, than in founding new; or if he preaches the word for the first time in Galatia and Phrygia, there is no record of



the details of his labours. In Macedonia, however, he enters upon entirely new ground: though usually associated with Silas, yet for a time circumstances lead to their separation, and he is compelled and enabled to act upon his own individual responsibility. And although we shall see that his sphere of action when separated from his companions was limited, the result of his solitary labours might stimulate his feelings of independence and self-reliance, and inspire a confidence in his own ability to act entirely alone.

It is not needful to speculate upon the nature of the vision that determined him to proceed to Philippi. There is nothing improbable in the story as we have it. To men of ardent imagination, possessed by a vivid belief in supernatural guidance, and animated by a fixed purpose which occupies their thoughts to the exclusion of other topics, intimations of this nature are almost sure to come in one form or another; and perhaps as often in a dream as not. Paul and Silas, we are told, had at first intended to continue their labours in Asia Minor, but were turned back in the two directions in which they had essayed to proceed. Going onward then to Troas, in face of Europe, it was to be expected that Paul's fancy would be fired by the idea of carrying the word into untried regions; and then it would be only natural that something should occur to legitimate the course he was anxious to pursue. And it is not impossible that this was seconded by information supplied, and by facilities for the journey which were found to exist. Believing that they were guided by the Divine Spirit, and full of hope in the future that lay before them, the party sailed from Troas, and after a brief voyage arrived in Philippi—the first to bring the good news of the kingdom to those regions. Probably, we may almost say certainly, they were not the first to preach the Gospel in Europe, since there can be scarcely a doubt that at this time a church had been established by some nameless brethren in Rome itself.

In Philippi, the first place visited, there was apparently no

synagogue of the Jews; for the description of the place by the river-side, to which Paul and Silas repaired on the Sabbath, seems to show that it was habitually used for the purposes of prayer by the worshippers of Jehovah; and this would not have been the case had there been a building for that purpose in the city itself. On arriving there they found women worshipping, to whom Paul addressed himself, and one of them, Lydia, apparently a native of Thyatira, "a seller of purple," and a person of wealth and importance, was converted by his preaching, and received baptism, together with her household. In later Christian writings she is the type of the believing matron, who employs her wealth and her influence for the purpose of showing hospitality to the preachers of the word and of facilitating its diffusion; but it is quite possible that if we could lift the veil that covers so much of the early history of the Church, we should find her to be that very person who is designated in the address of the Spirit to the church at Thyatira,<sup>1</sup> as that woman Jezebel who calleth herself a prophetess, and who seduces the servants of the Lord, teaching them to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.<sup>2</sup> Yielding to her solicitations, Paul and Silas, with their followers, took up their abode in her house, and continued to reside there for some time, preaching the word, apparently, with much success; though in the history we only have its results indirectly, when we are told that after their release from prison they return to the house of Lydia and exhort the brethren. From the Epistle to the Philippians, however, we gather that the church then formed continued to subsist and prosper, and that it maintained especially friendly relations with Paul, setting the example of contributing to his support, and persisting in that course even up to the time of his imprisonment at Rome.

<sup>1</sup> Rev. ii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> M. Renan, *Saint Paul*, p. 303, suggests that this was an epithet of Paul himself; but "that woman Jezebel" surely indicates that the person designated was a woman. The whole passage implies, further, her presence and activity at the time of writing; and this excludes the idea that Paul could have been the person intended. It may be only a coincidence; but if so, it is a very singular one.

As there are no notes of time in this portion of the Acts, we cannot even conjecture how long they were allowed to continue their preaching without opposition. It would appear that the absence of a synagogue removed one main source of hostility, since there were no Jews to be offended, and few others would at first pay any attention to their proceedings. We are told that the reason for their ultimate expulsion was not their preaching, but simply an inopportune display of their miraculous gifts. We may, however, be permitted to doubt the accuracy of the story told us, since it involves the actual demoniacal possession of a woman, whom we should describe as hysterical or epileptic, with, probably, a dash of conscious imposture—supernatural knowledge of the true character of Paul and Silas, and of the nature and truth of their mission, and its persistent proclamation by the indwelling demon—and his actual expulsion in consequence. And then it depicts the owners of this woman, not as impressed with this signal display of miraculous power, but exasperated against the performers because it interferes with their gains. Actuated by this feeling, they make a charge against the two exorcists, for which there is no real foundation, but which obtains immediate credence, without either investigation or proof, both with the populace and with the magistrates of the city. So that, from the orthodox standpoint, Paul and Silas, though gifted with supernatural power and guided by the Divine Spirit, exercise their gifts so injudiciously as to repel, instead of convincing, those who witnessed their display, and to procure not only their own immediate punishment, but also their premature expulsion from a promising field of labour. It has, indeed, been suggested that they could not endure that their work in Philippi should be aided by the utterances of a demon—"that the credit even of the Gospel should be enhanced by such unholy means." But there is something almost puerile in such a suggestion. For Paul and Silas were proclaiming themselves in the very character which the demon assigned to them to all who would listen; and if the demon were compelled to recognize and

declare the sacredness and truth of their mission, that compulsion must have proceeded from an overruling divine power, with which they assumed to interfere. So that while, from the historical point of view, we see only a nervous disorder, which neither implied a supernatural cause, nor needed, even if it admitted, a supernatural cure—from the orthodox, we can scarcely attribute to them conduct so purposeless, and so injurious to the cause in which they were engaged, the success of which should have been their primary object.

We may, then, probably conclude that they were imprisoned by order of the magistrates, and may admit as possible that some unwise display of their power as exorcists, a power then popularly attributed to Jews, and which they would be able to exercise by reason of this very belief in its possession, might have brought to a head a growing feeling of dissatisfaction excited by their previous attempts to preach a new God and to introduce new customs in the city. But we should be disposed to believe that the charge reported to have been made against them expressed their real offence; and in that case it is very likely that they would meet with no more sympathy or forbearance than agents of the International, accused of some conduct that brought them within reach of the law, would experience at the present day before the tribunals of France or Germany. The people would be indignant with the contempt shown to the objects of their worship, and the magistrates with the open defiance of Roman law in a Roman colony. We can therefore understand how, upon such a charge, supported as it would be by conclusive evidence, they might be examined by scourging, and afterwards sent to prison. Nor must we be too hard upon the magistrates. However wrong and unjust we may consider their conduct to have been, we are bound to judge the men themselves according to their means and opportunities of knowledge, and we can see that their proceedings were not the result of any wilful error on their part, but of the inevitable influence of their education and position. To proclaim the nullity of the

gods who had given to Rome her universal dominion, would to them, necessarily, appear Atheism: to preach in their place a crucified malefactor who was to return to the earth in a very few years to overthrow the existing order of things, would seem the extreme of madness, but probably not the less dangerous for its absurdity. Certainly, a person who in England at the present time took every opportunity of denying in opprobrious terms the divinity of the Gods, or God, we worship, and of preaching doctrines subversive of the existing political and social order, and who attempted to organize a society upon the basis of that denial, for the purpose of carrying out those doctrines, would fare little better at first, and probably very much worse at last, than our two missionaries are related to have done; if his proceedings once brought him within reach of the law.

“And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them.” This is one of the brief notices, of which there are so many in the New Testament, that set before us with inimitable simplicity and effectiveness the spirit which a belief in the truth of the resurrection of Jesus had infused into the disciples; and which, probably, have done more than creed and dogma to spread that belief, and to cheer and console those who are called upon to suffer for its sake. Nor is it needful to share in the opinions which Paul and Silas entertained in order to sympathize with their condition and derive encouragement from their example. For they were at least sincere and zealous, firmly persuaded of the essential truth and infinite value of the doctrines they taught, and ready to do and to suffer all things in their propagation. And here, in the depths of a Roman dungeon, and unable to sleep because of their wounds and their fetters, they were able to realize the presence of the God whom they preached, and even to rejoice that they were counted worthy to suffer for His cause. Men in the present day are called upon to serve the cause of truth, which is emphatically the cause of God, in different ways, and the nature of the persecution to which they are subject differs



also; but they may all profit by the example of endurance and courage thus exhibited. And it is not material that doubts may be thrown upon the literal accuracy of the narrative, for it truly exhibits the spirit in which the preachers of the glad tidings went forth to their work, and that enabled them to endure the sufferings their proceedings involved.

How much of the subsequent story is historical, and with what deductions or corrections it is to be received, we are unable to say. An earthquake that should open the well-secured doors of a Roman prison, and loosen the bonds of the prisoners, but which should leave the building and its inmates uninjured, is a phenomenon of which we have no experience, and cannot by any effort of the imagination realize for ourselves. That it should shatter the walls and crush all living creatures under their ruins, is a familiar experience; and almost equally familiar is it that, in the midst of the general ruin, there should be individual escapes of the most marvellous character. But that it should shake fetters from the limbs of prisoners, especially considering the manner in which they were secured, and cast open the doors for their escape, without injuring them or overthrowing the edifice, is as inconceivable from the orthodox as from the historical standpoint: not that from the former there is any difficulty in supposing a supernatural removal of the chains and opening of the doors, but that an earthquake is not a suitable machinery for the purpose. Nor are we in a position to conjecture what were the circumstances that gave rise to the legend. All, therefore, that we appear to be able to conclude is, that on its being made known to the magistrates that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were released from prison and permitted to go at large, on condition of leaving the city. This condition appears to be implied by the language attributed to the magistrates, "They desired them to depart out of the city;" and unless it had been imposed, there is nothing to account for their conduct in leaving so promising a field of labour. Accordingly they returned to the house of

Lydia, where they had a brief interview with the brethren, and then departed.

From Philippi they proceed to Thessalonica, by way, we are told, of Amphipolis and Apollonia, at neither of which towns did they make any stay, presumably because there was no settlement of Jews in the place to which they could address themselves. It may appear singular that Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, who seems, subsequently, to imply that he had neither mission nor aptitude to address the Jews, should nevertheless have thus habitually preached to them in the first instance; and even should not have preached to Gentiles unless he were able to do this. That such a practice should be imputed to him, appears, indeed, to throw a doubt upon the story. But we must always bear in mind his position at this time as a delegate from the church of Antioch, forming one of a mission which we may believe they had organized, and having, as he tells us, only a short time before received the sanction of the leading Apostles. And the immediate object of the journey is described to have been to confirm the churches previously founded by Barnabas and himself, and to deliver to them the ordinances appointed by the Apostles and elders at Jerusalem. Obviously, therefore, the mission, though designed to include the Gentiles, could not have been intended to imply neglect of the Jews. And it is even possible that at this time it was only through the Jews that access could be obtained to the Gentiles. In the rapid progresses of the party, staying apparently but a few weeks, or at the utmost a month or two, in the towns that they visited, there might be no opportunity of so preaching the truth to the Gentiles as to win their acceptance, excepting through the medium of the Jews settled among them, or of their fellow-countrymen who had already become proselytes. To those who were ignorant of the Jewish Scriptures, a double process would be needed; for before they could believe in Jesus as the Messiah, it was necessary to teach them what the Messiah was to be. And even in preaching Jehovah as the God whom they were to worship,

there must have been some reference to the Scriptures that revealed His will, of which the Gentiles in general had heard nothing. So that the founding of a Gentile church would be very greatly facilitated if it were possible to begin by winning over some of those who had already been either completely or partially initiated into Judaism, and such would be most easily approached at their Sabbath meetings in the synagogue.

The account given of the conversion of the jailer at Philippi appears to contain an implicit contradiction of these views ; but it seems impossible to regard it as historical. It contradicts the entire tenor of the history as relating to the conduct of Paul and Silas and the doctrines taught by Paul. And the whole story is unintelligible. The jailer, we are told, terrified at the consequences that would follow from the assumed escape of his prisoners, is about to slay himself, and then, being relieved from this fear, falls down at the feet of Paul and Silas, calling them lords, and asking them what he must do to be saved : but saved from what ? The approved answer to this question is—from eternal damnation : but in what manner and from what source could he have received such an idea ? and what was there in the relief from his former fear that should suggest it to him at the moment ; and how could he suppose that his captives were able to point out to him the means of safety ? And if these questions are answered as, by a few arbitrary assumptions for which the text furnishes no warrant, they may be, then what could he understand by belief in the Lord Jesus Christ ; and how does it happen that the teaching of Paul upon this single occasion should differ so noticeably from all that we are told of his previous teaching to Gentiles, as well as from what we learn from himself he had taught to his Gentile converts at Thessalonica just afterwards ? for to them he had preached the one true God, who hath made the world, and who hath raised Jesus from the dead. These are questions to which it appears impossible to furnish a satisfactory reply, and we therefore regard the incident,

at least in the form in which it is transmitted to us, as due entirely to the apologetic purposes of the author.

It is important, under this view, to notice the points of similarity between the account here given and that of the baptism of the Ethiopian treasurer of Queen Candace by Philip. As we have pointed out, there is, though on a smaller scale, a similar parallelism between the acts attributed respectively to Philip and to Paul, and that which we find on a larger scale between those of Paul and Peter. And this is one of the instances. Philip, who is only a deacon, meets a solitary traveller to whom, under the direction of the Spirit, he addresses himself, and preaching Jesus to him so works upon his feelings as to lead him at once to seek to be baptized; when, without investigation or preparation, and in the absence of any other believer, upon the mere repetition of a formula of belief that Jesus is the Son of God, the rite is administered. In the instance of the jailer, the surrounding circumstances are different, but the essential features of the story correspond. A man who had never previously heard of Jesus—such, at least, is the obvious purport of the narrative—is suddenly impelled to ask for the means of safety; and then, without investigation or preparation, and without any formal meeting of the church, he is, after a very brief instruction, admitted to baptism—the story of course implying that he had professed the required belief; and, which is no doubt a new element, not only he, but all his house, are baptized. The reasonable inference appears to be, looking to the obviously unhistorical character of both incidents, that Paul had, in the eyes of the stricter party, been guilty of laxity in administering the rite of baptism, and that the object of the writer is to furnish an implicit justification of his conduct, by showing not only that it had been sanctioned by a brother as high in the church as Silas, but also that Philip, who was established as bishop at Hierapolis, in the neighbourhood in which Paul had so long preached, and whose authority must have been often invoked

against his assumed irregularities, had himself pursued a similar line of conduct when the nature of the circumstances rendered it expedient.

On arriving at Thessalonica, Paul, according to his usual custom, repaired to the synagogue, and then began to preach his new doctrines, setting forth Jesus as the Messiah, proved to be such, not by his triumphs, but by his sufferings. Or rather, we may suppose, proved to be such by his resurrection, in spite of the sufferings he had endured, which, instead of disparaging, rather enhanced his claim; since, according to his view of the prophecies, Christ was to suffer; and his resurrection must needs have been preceded by his death at the hands of his enemies. These doctrines met with wide acceptance, many of the Jews and a great multitude of the devout Greeks (= proselytes), and not a few honourable women, believing. This success excited the displeasure of those Jews who were unconvinced, and they succeeded in rousing the populace of the city against the new teachers and their supporters, and produced so formidable a demonstration, that Paul and Silas were compelled to conceal themselves. The mob, unable to wreak their vengeance upon them, seized on Jason, with whom they had been living, with others of the brethren, and took them before the magistrates, accusing them of sedition. Upon this charge the inculpated members of the society were, in modern phraseology, held to bail; and then the brethren fearing for the safety of Paul and Silas, sent them away by night to Berea.

Such, at least, is the story in the Acts, and taken by itself there is nothing to induce us to distrust its accuracy, excepting, perhaps, that we should allow a longer period than a fortnight for the events described, and should suppose that Paul and Silas must have formed a separate church which had been completely organized before the outbreak. This latter is indeed implied in the term "brethren;" for these must have been baptized, and a church must have been formed for the purpose, and this may have been one main cause of offence with the unbe-



lieving Jews. When, however, it is compared with Paul's letters to the brethren at Thessalonica, difficulties are suggested which appear at first sight insurmountable. For these letters, especially the first, seem to imply in the clearest manner that the church was composed exclusively of Gentiles, and that the Jews had no share in the persecutions from which they had suffered. At a later time, in writing to the Gentile churches of Galatia, Corinth, and Rome, Paul presupposes in his readers a familiar acquaintance with the Law and with the Hebrew Scriptures. How is it, then, that in addressing the church at Thessalonica, composed of some Jews and of a great multitude of devout Greeks,<sup>1</sup> and of many chief women, there is no reference to the Law or to the Scriptures? To this it may be answered, that so far as the composition of the church is concerned, it might be supposed that on the occasion of the open rupture between Paul and Silas and the body of the Jews, those Jews who had been at first attracted by the new doctrines felt compelled to cast in their lot with their co-religionists; so that the church which Paul addressed was ultimately composed of none but Gentiles; and, so far as relates to the selection of topics, that, there being no question raised within the church itself as to the observance of the Law, there could be no need to warn his converts against attempts to enforce it. The Jews outside of the body objected to the preaching of the Gospel to Gentiles, but they would not trouble themselves with the internal affairs of the churches that might be formed. Their opposition was to Paul and his companions, who, Jews themselves, and therefore bound to respect the exclusions which the Law prescribed, professed to open the door of the kingdom to men who neither observed, nor were required to observe, any of the conditions upon which their entrance depended. But they would keep themselves aloof from these irregular, and, as they would regard

<sup>1</sup> Paley, in his *Horæ Paulinæ*, suggests, following the reading in some manuscripts, that the true reading is, "of devout men and of Greeks a great multitude." This is not improbable, but it would but slightly diminish the difficulty.

them, unauthorized communities, and would repudiate the idea that there could be anything in common between them. They might show coldness and ill-will; they might prompt or encourage the authorities to interfere, or help to stimulate the popular hostility; but there was no ground upon which to justify any direct interference on their own part. And as Gentile believers were freed from all necessity to observe the Law, there could be, in a church exclusively composed of such, no quarter from which attempts would be made to introduce its observance. It is possible, therefore, that the account in the Acts substantially represents the actual course of events, quite as accurately indeed as we should have a right to expect in a work composed several years afterwards from the report of Paul or of Timothy, or from loose memoranda made by either at the time.

Driven from Thessalonica, Paul and Silas proceeded to Berea, where they began by addressing themselves to the Jews, and where their preaching Jesus as the Messiah, proved to be such by his resurrection from the dead, and his speedy return to earth to establish the kingdom of heaven, awakened attention and inquiry. The difficulty which the Jews experienced was, that they were called upon to recognize a suffering, when they expected a triumphant Messiah; and especially that they were asked to recognize in that character a man whose attempt to establish his kingdom had been rudely checked by their Gentile oppressors, and who had suffered death in the very place where he expected to set up his throne. But there were passages in their sacred writings capable of lending themselves to such a conception, and these Bereans, in view of the near triumphant return which Paul so confidently predicted, were willing to give to these passages a careful consideration. And a church was formed from among them, including also proselytes of the gate and devout women. What would have been the ultimate result if the preaching of Paul and Silas had not been interrupted, can only be conjectured; for those who had raised the people of Thessalonica against them, followed them to Berea, where they

at once succeeded in rendering them obnoxious to, apparently, the whole Jewish body—possibly by a description of their conduct in the former place. In the discussions that followed, the impetuous and uncompromising spirit of Paul appears to have carried him so far beyond his colleagues, that it became necessary for the brethren to secure his safety by sending him out of the country; while Silas and Timothy were able for the time to remain behind without danger, holding themselves, however, in readiness to join him whenever he should have found a fresh field of labour.

In this case we derive no assistance whatever from the account in the Acts as to the specific cause of offence given by Paul; for there is no report either of his speeches or of the objections of his opponents. Presumably, the primary grounds of offence were the preaching a crucified Messiah to Jews who disbelieved in the resurrection, and therefore regarded the promised second coming in their life-time as a delusion. But the principal ground was probably the circumstance that he and his companions at once turned to Gentiles when the Jews hesitated to be convinced, and admitted them to the essential privileges of Judaism, teaching them to worship the same God and to wait for the same resurrection, and promising them an entrance into the same kingdom, on the sole condition of a belief in Jesus and by baptizing them into his name; thus setting up by the side of the orthodox Jewish synagogue a heterodox Gentile congregation, and claiming for these new converts, not equality merely, but superiority, in the favour of the covenant God of Israel. The Jews might listen with patience to arguments drawn from their Scriptures for the purpose of showing that the Messiah ought to suffer the extremity of humiliation before he entered into his glory, and at most they would regard Paul and his colleagues as harmless though mistaken enthusiasts, so long as they confined themselves within these limits. But when, upon such evidence as these new preachers could offer, they were summoned to believe in the resurrection from the dead, and consequent

Messiahship, of that Jesus whom their rulers had rejected and their Roman masters had crucified, and told that belief in his resurrection and baptism into his name were now the only means to secure the favour of Jehovah; and when upon their natural, indeed inevitable, reluctance to accept a fact so improbable, and a doctrine so contrary to all that they had learned from their Scriptures, they were menaced with exclusion from the kingdom of heaven, and Gentiles were admitted avowedly to engross the privileges which they had forfeited, we can well understand the deep resentment provoked, and can feel no surprise at their persistent hostility to Paul. It was not merely that, from their point of view, his reasonings were sophistical and his conclusions heretical, but that he everywhere created a schism; appealing from those who were instructed in the Law to the unlearned and ignorant masses, and abusing their simplicity to the profit of the new sect.

Whether the fate of the nation would have been better if they had accepted Jesus as the Messiah, may even be a question. They would, no doubt, have escaped much suffering; but they would have been merged in the general Christian body, and might now be worshipping one of their own countrywomen as the Mother of God in Spain or Italy, or repeating the formula, "There is no God but Allah, and Mahomet is his Prophet," in Egypt and the East.<sup>1</sup> And perhaps, in spite of everything, it is better and more honourable to have been faithful to Jehovah. But however this may be, every impartial reasoner must admit that they were justified in rejecting the preaching of Paul; if, that is, belief should bear any proportion to evidence; for he asked them to believe a fact, not, perhaps, to them incredible, but in the very highest degree improbable, and needing the strongest evidence in its support, upon the faith of an appearance to himself in a vision, and of reported appearances to a

<sup>1</sup> Or perhaps in England be joining in a pilgrimage to the sacred heart of Jesus, in accordance with the diseased fancy of a hysterical nun. One is disposed to laugh at spiritualism; but, absurdity for absurdity, theirs is surely the more harmless and excusable.

number of obscure individuals, none of whom could be brought forward to corroborate his statement. We look at these things through the halo of distance, and as part of a series of miraculous occurrences with which they coincided and harmonized ; but the Jews to whom Paul preached were contemporary with the events, and lived in a world really as natural and unmiraculous as our own.<sup>1</sup> With them, therefore, at this time, as would be the case with ourselves now, the assertion that such wonders had then recently occurred, was certain at first to be received with incredulity. For though, with perhaps the majority of minds, the mere apparent incredibility of a statement, if alleged to be supernatural, is of itself a strong ground of attraction, this is only when it harmonizes with previous beliefs, or meets the vague yearnings for something that may transport us beyond the narrow visible sphere in which we move, and show us if only a glimpse of the unseen realities beyond. And neither of these grounds of acceptance would exist with the Jews in the case of the preaching of Paul. All their previous beliefs were connected with the sacredness and inviolability of the Law, which Paul, on the faith of these supposed marvels, assailed ; and their daily observances at home and weekly services in the synagogue were all means for maintaining and showing forth their relation to Jehovah, their unseen but ever-present God. Some might be convinced, as in the present day there is no doctrine, however absurd or immoral, the preaching of which does not win converts ; but the majority would remain obstinately incredulous, and the partial secessions from their ranks would only exasperate the feelings with which they regarded the man by whom they had been occasioned. And if we are disposed to blame them for the methods in which their hostility was exhibited, we are bound to remember that in the most extreme of these they only too faithfully displayed the spirit of the injunctions which they believed

<sup>1</sup> It may be said that they believed in demons, possession, charms and exorcisms. But this belief, as far as it operated, would deprive a large part of the Christian evidences of all value, and would altogether destroy the pretensions of Paul founded upon his alleged power to work signs and wonders.



themselves to have received from Jehovah himself through the mouth of their great lawgiver.

Those who were charged with the duty of providing for the safety of Paul, probably traders in some of the commodities which formed the commerce of those parts, brought him to Athens—the port of which city we may suppose to have been their intended destination. Here he decided to remain, and to make it the starting-point of a new mission. They accordingly left him, taking a message (presumably written) to Silas and Timotheus requesting them to join him at the earliest opportunity, and Paul found himself alone in the city. Athens was at this time the head-quarters of philosophy and of art. It was a place, too, in which the utter stagnation of political life gave leisure and zest for the pursuit of every attractive novelty; and in which the worship of the gods, who had given to Athens a pre-eminence which even her conquerors were compelled to recognize, was maintained in its pristine splendour, if not with its pristine faith. Here also there appears to have been a synagogue of the Jews and proselytes among the Gentiles, and to these we may conjecture that Paul addressed himself in the first instance—though the writer is silent on the subject—in fact, seeming to include the Jews and devout persons in the censure passed upon the city, that it was wholly given to idolatry.

The scene on Mars' Hill is of very doubtful authority. The writer of the Acts obviously intends to represent Paul as alone in the city, so that there was no disciple ready to be his amanuensis, and to preserve in writing for the use of the Church the arguments by which his leader sought to win idolaters to the worship of the one true God. And, however eager the Athenians might have been after novelty, we may doubt whether a wandering Jewish tent-maker, speaking such Greek as we find in the Epistles, would have excited sufficient attention to have been brought before the great Council of the city. We may be quite sure that he would not; for the educated Athenians, who prided themselves especially upon the purity and elegance of their

speech, would have been more repelled by Paul's uncouth phraseology and provincial pronunciation, and by the habitual solecisms of his language, than even by his assertion that God had raised a man from the dead. If we had the direct report of an eye-witness,<sup>1</sup> there might be some pretence for asking us to disregard these improbabilities. But when the story rests, at the best, upon a report made to the writer by Paul or one of his companions some years afterwards, and has been shaped in accordance with a purpose, we can only suppose that the character and position of the audience has been changed, and that the speech, even if substantially representing the arguments that Paul was accustomed to address to Gentiles who were still idolaters, has been carefully re-touched.<sup>2</sup> It is quite possible, considering the heterogeneous elements of the floating population of Athens, that Paul may have had an opportunity afforded him of declaring his views—perhaps among the youth who frequented the various schools of the place—but certainly the Council of the Areopagus would not be convened for the purpose: just as at Oxford an open-air preacher, or one of the propaganda of some novel sect, might gain a hearing from the undergraduates, yet would never be admitted to explain himself before the heads of houses. But we cannot go farther than this. It might please the fancy of the historian to represent Paul as confronting the philosophy and faith of the age in presence of the most venerable assembly of the ancient world; but this affords no ground for assuming the actual truth of the narrative—rather, indeed,

<sup>1</sup> M. Renan suggests that Timothy may have been present, and have preserved some memoranda of the speech or some recollection of its topics. But this is improbable, since the writer, who in that case must be supposed to have received his information from him, would scarcely have written in such a manner as to imply his absence.

<sup>2</sup> It contains reminiscences of the speech of Stephen before the Council, which orthodox commentators attribute to the impression which that speech made upon Paul at the time, but which, considering the obvious improbability that the writer of the Acts, who was not present on either occasion, should have been able to reproduce the exact words employed by the two speakers, are more naturally accounted for by supposing that the same person composed both, and consciously or unconsciously repeated himself.

the reverse, for we can here find an explanation of the form it has taken, independently of any assumption of its accuracy.

The arguments attributed to Paul are very different from what we should have expected, whether he is regarded from the old Jewish or from the modern Christian point of view, since they appear to be based upon the assumption that the worship of the Athenians was directed really, though unconsciously, to the one true God, and that even their idolatry was the result of an ignorance which God had overlooked because it was inevitable. He tells them, indeed, as their philosophers for many generations had done, that the God of whom all men were the offspring could not be like to gold or silver or stone graven by the hand of man, and that the Ruler and Sustainer of the heavens and the earth could not be expected to dwell in any temple, however splendid. But what essentially distinguishes the spirit of his teaching from that of most modern missionaries is, that he begins by appealing to ideas common to himself and to his audience, whose truth they were prepared to recognize, and upon this common ground essays to build the novel doctrines that he desires to inculcate. He recognizes the truth that lay at the basis of their erroneous conceptions, and thus predisposes them to admit the higher and purer truth he is commissioned to preach; and he does justice also to the feeble gropings after the knowledge of God which proved man's affinity to his nature; and thus, we learn, he secured an attentive hearing. When, however, he attempted to pass beyond this, and to preach the imminent judgment of the world, upon a day already fixed, by a man appointed for the purpose, and proceeded to offer in proof of this doctrine the fact that God had raised this man from the dead, he was, we are told, met by a burst of universal derision. That the end of the world was close at hand, that the God of whom they had just heard as the Maker of the earth and the heavens, the Father and Ruler of all nations, should delegate the task of judging the world to a man, were assertions calculated to produce the contemptuous dissent of the audience. But when, in proof of

these incredibilities, this obscure Jew told them that this man had been already raised from the dead, there can be no ground for surprise if the assembly broke up in laughter and mockery.<sup>1</sup> Nor need we wonder that some should have been won to the new faith by force, not so much of the evidence offered, but of the attraction exercised by its representations of the character of God and the destinies of man, and by the pure and elevated morality with which these were associated. But at no time was Christianity a popular or the prevailing faith at Athens until the piety of Justinian led him to suppress the schools of philosophy, which in spite of every discouragement had continued to subsist there. And even then the result was rather negative than positive. The former philosophies were stamped out, but the novel doctrines failed to flourish in the uncongenial soil. And though it was impossible that the old gods could have continued to be worshipped, yet it may be questioned whether much has been gained by substituting Mary Panagia for Athene Polias, and the Saints of the Greek Hagiology for the crowd of inferior deities. Whatever may be our opinion of the Athenians in the time of Paul, we can scarcely hold them inferior to their modern descendants either in public spirit or in private virtue: only, perhaps, in their orthodoxy can the latter claim a superiority.

The stay of Paul at Athens was brief. There is no hint of any persecution by Jew or Gentile; but to an earnest man indifference is often more depressing than hostility, since the latter is at least a proof of the impression he has made, and thus acts as a stimulus to renewed efforts. So that when his audience will not attach enough importance to his doctrines even to quarrel with him, there is little encouragement to persist. Hence Paul left Athens and proceeded to Corinth, not having been joined by either of his companions, or not caring to retain Timothy in his company in so unpromising a field of labour.

<sup>1</sup> Such scenes would be common enough in the experience of the early preachers of the Gospel, and the writer might only be transferring to Athens incidents which he had more than once witnessed.

And we are told that he left behind a few converts, of whom two are named—one, Dionysius, described as a member of the court of Areopagus; and the other, Damaris, an obscure and possibly, as some orthodox commentators have suggested, a degraded woman.

On arriving at Corinth, Paul associated himself with a Jew named Aquila, who with his wife Priscilla had been recently forced to leave Rome in consequence of a decree of the Emperor expelling all Jews from the city. We know nothing of the actual circumstances which occasioned this decree, but from a brief notice in Suetonius it would seem to have been provoked by some tumultuous proceedings of the Jews connected with their Messianic expectations—either directly, or, as is most frequently suggested, by reason of the dissensions that sprung up between those who did and those who did not regard Jesus as the Messiah. This latter view may of course be correct; but there is no other ground for supposing it than the fact that the preaching of Paul provoked such dissensions. And if in Jerusalem itself there could be a large body of believers in Jesus who nevertheless lived in peace and security, distrusted, it may be, by the authorities, but not exciting the enmity of the people, no reason, it would seem, can be suggested why this should not also have been the case in Rome; for there the fact that they were strangers in a strange land would rather tend to efface distinctions among themselves. At Antioch, too, there is no hint of any quarrels between the believing Jews and their unconverted fellow-countrymen, any more than there is at Rome at the time of Paul's arrival. The suggestion, therefore, is purely gratuitous, unless on the assumption that the city had been visited by some adherent or imitator of Paul; and any such assumption seems to be contradicted by the Epistle to the Romans, and by all that we know of the subsequent history of that church. It is probable that the belief in Jesus as the Messiah had been carried to Rome by some of the first disciples; but as they preached only to Jews, or, if to Gentiles, only on a



Jewish basis, their preaching would, as we have seen, awaken no strife in the body. It would be quite possible that the hopes they held out of the immediate overthrow of the Roman power might render their converts less patient under the restraints of Roman law, and more defiant of Roman authority; and some exhibition of this temper might lead to indiscriminate banishment.

With Aquila and Priscilla Paul had apparently a double bond of union. Not only were they fellow-craftsmen with himself, and therefore, we may presume, natives of the same country, but they were also fellow-christians, having, no doubt, been initiated in Rome, and having formed part of the church of that place. Although this is not specifically stated, yet it is implied in the narrative. While waiting for the arrival of Silas and Timothy, Paul resided with them, repairing to the synagogue every Sabbath, but apparently not attempting to preach the Gospel, since it is only on the arrival of his two colleagues that we are told that he was pressed in spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ; and then, being met by the obstinate incredulity of the majority, he shook his raiment, and, disclaiming all responsibility for their future fate, declared his intention to leave them and preach thenceforth to the Gentiles. But it may be, and perhaps is more likely to have been the case, that Paul had from the first preached Jesus to the Jews and proselytes, so far as the regulations for conducting the service of the synagogue permitted, but that it was necessary to await the arrival of Silas and Timothy before attempting to organize a separate church. The incident shows that the share of Silas in the mission was far more important than any one would at first sight imagine from the account of the manner in which he was brought into it, as previously described, and that his importance, and the necessity of his co-operation, were fully recognized by Paul. And yet this is the last time that his name is mentioned in the history. We see from the superscription to the two letters to the Thessalonians, as well as from the

brief notice in the second to the Corinthians,<sup>1</sup> that he continued to be associated with Paul in preaching the Gospel at Corinth; and we can scarcely doubt that here, as well as at Philippi, he had his share in the suffering and obloquy which their mission to the Gentiles provoked at the hands of the Jews; but these have obtained no recognition either from the writer of the Acts or from Paul.<sup>2</sup> Henceforth he also disappears from our view, and we can only conjecture that he continued to display in other fields the qualities which had caused him to be selected as a colleague to Paul, and which apparently made him so useful in that capacity.

We may indeed surmise, from the conduct here attributed to Paul, and from what he afterwards says as to the small number of the church who had been baptized by him, that Silas was the ostensible head of this mission, as Barnabas had been of the former. It is true that Paul, in view of the pretensions of his opponents, appears to disparage baptism, and to lower the function of those who were sent to baptize, in comparison with his own of preaching the Gospel. But the administration of the rite of initiation, that rite by which believers were buried together with Christ, in order that they might rise with him, and which was the instrument of the change that transferred them from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God, could never be regarded in the Church as a light matter. It would only be confided to the very highest in office, men who not merely were qualified to judge of the fitness of the recipient, but capacitated to confer the spiritual benefits which it was assumed to impart. To preach the word was essential, but it was not sufficient; and it would be the duty of the officer who decided

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. i. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, not merely refrains from any mention of Silas, but he writes so as apparently to exclude him from any share in the work, claiming the whole merit of the success to himself; and but for the brief notice in the second letter, we might fancy he had not even been with Paul. Probably in the matter of the question raised at Antioch, Silas as well as Barnabas adhered to the party of the Apostles.

upon the fitness of the candidate for admission, and who afterwards admitted him, to determine upon the character of the fruit which that preaching might bear. There was, consequently, an official superiority implied in the person who baptized, as compared with him who preached; and if, as we should gather from Paul's language, it was Silas by whom the vast majority of the church had been baptized, that superiority would belong to him.

At Corinth, Paul—for we follow our authority in speaking of him alone—found himself in one of those mixed communities that offered peculiar facilities for the spread of the new doctrine. As one of the principal emporia for the trade between Rome and the East, it was crowded with a population drawn from all the various countries whose commodities found a mart there; and this commingling of races necessarily opened a way for the reception of new ideas. No one could altogether ignore the existence of other modes of thought and of other forms of religion, besides those with which he had been familiar in his childhood; and the enforced recognition of their existence as a fact would at least open the way for inquiries into the reasons upon which they were based, and possibly even for a patient audience to any one who possessed an intense conviction of the truth of his own. And this blending together of men of various races, each one having its local deities and local worship, would afford a standpoint from which to vindicate the claims of the one true God to universal homage. The tutelary deities of Athens might still command the reverence of an Athenian; but what would the shifting and promiscuous population of Corinth care for the gods of that city, or how could they justify the continued worship of those whom they had served at home? And the very dissoluteness of manners which had made Corinth a by-word, by reason of the satiety and disgust that were its inevitable fruits, would predispose many to welcome a preacher who, by inculcating above all things an ascetic severity of morals, vindicated their repulsion to the prevalent licence. Human nature was much

the same then as now, in that respect at least ; and we often find that the very persons whose temperament makes them especially susceptible to the seductions of voluptuousness, are those who in other moods are most attracted by the severest ideal of purity and devotion ; and that they who have exhausted the enjoyments which unrestrained sensual gratification can furnish, are the most ready to join in the denunciation of all pleasure as idle, if not sinful. "Vanity of vanities—all things are vanity," said the Preacher ; but he was brought to that conclusion by the experience of unchecked power and unbridled licence. And in addition to these, there must have been many who lamented the vices they were compelled to witness, and were indignant that the worship of the gods should be polluted by a vile traffic in unchastity. And among the slaves—constituting the largest portion of the population—there would be numbers ready to listen to a preacher who proclaimed an almost immediate termination of the rule under which they groaned, and their own admission on terms of equality into the coming kingdom of heaven. Nor must we forget the powerful attraction which the Gospel as preached by Paul would possess for women ; for he taught that in Christ Jesus there was neither male nor female ; that woman, instead of being the toy or the slave of the man, was his equal in the sight of God, and equally entitled to the benefits of the salvation which Christ had procured ; admitted to the Church by the same rite, incurring the same obligations, and sharing in the same hopes. And none, whatever her previous profession or conduct, was excluded from admission.<sup>1</sup> To all these various classes Jesus was preached, and a flourishing church was formed, of which Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue when Paul arrived in the city, was a member.

Here, for the first time in the career of Paul, we are able to gather from his own writings what was the character of his

<sup>1</sup> If the third Gospel were originally written by a companion of Paul, it is very possible that his conduct in the case of such persons as Damaris, doubtless the type of a class, may account for the introduction of the incident of the washing of the feet of Jesus by a woman who was a sinner.

teaching, since there can be scarcely a doubt that at least the first Epistle to the Thessalonians was written from Corinth, and probably this was the case with the second also. Or if, as some suppose, what we have as the second Epistle was written from Berea, though this seems inconsistent with the indications of a lapse of time since Paul had left Thessalonica, our inferences would not be affected, as there is no difference in the substance of the teaching of the two. Paul was not a man who at the same time taught one set of doctrines to his converts in one place, and another in another—justification by faith to the Corinthians, and the near end of the world to the Thessalonians. We may be sure that what he wrote to the latter was what he was preaching to the former. And it must be remembered that in neither of the letters which he subsequently addressed to his followers in Corinth, though there is a great change in his method of presenting Christian doctrine as compared with these earlier letters, is there any hint that these modified doctrines had been taught to the Corinthians while he was with them. These later letters, indeed, enable us to add many important particulars to the conception we should form of the details of his preaching, but they do not alter its fundamental character. It seems, then, that we may here learn what Paul and Silas, as representing the Church, or—if this view should be objected to as not adequately recognizing Paul's superiority and independence—what Paul himself, after he had received from the three leading Apostles the right hand of fellowship that he should go to the Gentiles, preached to them as the Gospel of Christ.

Viewed under this aspect, the two Epistles are at first sight disappointing, for we find in them nothing of what we have been accustomed to regard as Paul's especial doctrines. "There is no mention of the great question of circumcision and uncircumcision—of faith and works—of the relation of Jew and Gentile—of union with the mystical body of Christ—of death unto life—of the mystery of past ages that had now been revealed." The merit of the Thessalonians is, that they turned from idols to



serve the living and true God, and to wait for the coming of His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivers them from the wrath to come. The fundamental idea is the approaching consummation of all things, when God will judge the world in righteousness, and when those who have believed in Jesus, and have been baptized into his name, together, presumably, with those deceased friends for whom a vicarious baptism had been performed,<sup>1</sup> will not only be saved from punishment, but will be for ever associated with him in his kingdom. Their renunciation of idol-worship had involved—as in a small city like Thessalonica it could not fail to do—hostility on the part of their countrymen, who would be scandalized by such impiety and resent its display; but there is no suggestion of any hostility on the part of the Jews, who probably ignored their existence, regarding them as outside the pale of the Law. But Paul, who had suffered both in Thessalonica and Berea from their opposition, and who was now in the midst of troubles excited by them in Corinth, which began by his shaking the dust off his garments in the synagogue, and came to a head in the formal accusation before Gallio, refers to them in terms of great bitterness—natural under the circumstances. It is quite obvious that there could not have been any question as to the obligations or advantages of the Law within the Church itself, either in Corinth or in Thessalonica. The Jews resented the conduct of Paul in preaching a heterodox doctrine to Gentiles, and in forming rival congregations upon the basis of these doctrines, and threw every possible obstacle in his way. But they had nothing to do with the internal arrangements of these congregations, and no brethren had yet suggested to these converts that the Law, though not imposed as a necessity, might yet avail as an advance in the Christian profession. The faithful in Thessalonica worshipped Jehovah; they believed in the resurrection and divine sonship of Jesus, and in his speedy return to

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 29.

earth, when they, because they had been baptized into his name, would be admitted into his kingdom; and in the mean time they were to be chaste, loving, orderly, industrious and forgiving, because God, who had called them, was faithful, and would perform whatever He had taught them to expect. And beside this, we may be certain that they had been taught to break bread and to drink the cup, thus in some mystical manner participating in the very body and blood of Christ,<sup>1</sup> in obedience to his injunction, and as symbolizing his death until his re-appearance.<sup>2</sup>

This seems a meagre theology; but if it could have been realized in the experience of the Church, how different might have been the history of the last eighteen centuries! But it was not in the nature of things that it could be sufficient. If there had been no Law recognized as divine, on the one hand, and no philosophy demanding categorical answers to the questions it raised, on the other, neither Jewish tenacity nor Greek subtlety, there might, perhaps, have been a chance that such a system should have had a fair trial. Even in that case it must have been developed into something very different when it was brought into contact at first with the decaying imperialism of Rome, and afterwards with the untaught ferocity of its barbarian conquerors. As it was, however, it was never even raised into a system. The necessities of controversy impelled Paul himself to change it within a very few years, in order to discover a logical basis for the freedom it recognized. And though its fundamental ideas may still be traced through all his writings, though he never ceases to inculcate love to God and love to the brethren, and to urge believers to live soberly, chastely, and godly, and, above all, to do what is right; yet these teachings are qualified by other representations which materially affect the *ensemble* of his doctrines, and justify many of the more repulsive conclusions that have been drawn from them. But with a little qualification, we might, perhaps, accept it as the religious ideal at which

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. x. 16, xi. 27.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 24—26.

reformers might aim. Faith, not in the "eternal not ourselves that makes for righteousness,"<sup>1</sup> but in the God who made and who governs the heavens and the earth, the Rewarder of them that walk uprightly, who will judge the world in righteousness, rendering to all men according to the deeds done in the body; and in a future state, in which the inequalities of earth shall be, not intensified, but redressed, and where punishment shall be, as now, restorative, not vindictive; and in the mean time to do justice and to love mercy, to respect others as well as ourselves, and to work intelligently for their and our progress and well-being;—such a creed would do something, if realized, towards the solution of the problems by which we are encountered.

It may be said, indeed, that the sanctions of such a creed would be inadequate; that the hope of ultimate restoration which it permits would sweep away every barrier to present indulgence; and that to remove the salutary fear of hell would open the flood-gates which now keep back, though imperfectly, the deluge of immorality and crime. But that this can be said, only shows how much the present system, even in the hearts of believers, rests upon fear, and how completely it has banished the idea of the Fatherhood of God, and obscured the conception of the true responsibility of man. But if it be understood that man is answerable for his own destiny, that all offences bring their appropriate punishment and none bring more, and that there never is a time when penitence and amendment may not procure some alleviation and authorize the hope of ultimate restoration, an intelligible motive is supplied, suited to our nature and agreeing with our habitual experience, which may be expected to produce self-restraint and well-doing. Or if, as may be urged, the spirit may have become so hopelessly diseased that restoration is impossible, we might suppose that then, as now, utter

<sup>1</sup> The logical difficulties in the way of conceiving a personal God may be, as they seem to be, insurmountable; but the necessary forms of our reasoning are not the measure of realities that transcend our powers of conception and expression. And "still the heart doth need a worship."

disorganization should result in death. And if it be said that in Paul's case these views were supplemented by representations of the inherent efficacy of baptism, and of the immediate appearance of the Christ in the clouds of heaven, and therefore that some extrinsic inducements should be added to them to secure their general acceptance, we may be quite certain that whenever they are preached to the multitude these necessary additions will be made.

These remarks proceed upon the assumption that the two Epistles are genuine; and such is our conclusion. We have already referred to the apparent discrepancies between the description of the church of Thessalonica given in the Acts and the idea we should form from these letters; and if the explanation we have given should be thought inadequate, it must be remembered that there is at least as much ground to distrust the accuracy of the historian as to impugn the authenticity of these writings. And the differences between the doctrines here taught by Paul and those which are developed in his four principal letters, appears to us to be fully accounted for by the change in his position which had taken place in the interval. Great stress has been laid upon the expression, "the wrath of God has come upon them to the uttermost" (*εις τελος*), as though such an expression could only have been used after the fall of Jerusalem. But this idea arises merely from our interpreting the words by the light of subsequent events. We, seeing the siege and capture of the city, the destruction of the Temple, the slaughter of myriads of Jews, and the slavery of the survivors, know that there was an extremity of wrath to come upon the nation of which all that they had then experienced was only a faint prelude; just as the later conquest under Hadrian, and the contemporary massacres in Cyprus and Cyrene, involved a yet deeper extremity. But viewing their condition in the light of the past, as the Apostle would do, looking at the loss of their independence—the distractions of the country—the recently threatened interference with their religion—the exactions of the

Roman governors—the oppression of the Sanhedrim—the turbulence of the mob, and the general insecurity of life and property—we can understand that he might well conceive of that as the extremity of suffering, and might use the words in question. In the same manner a republican Frenchman, after the Plebiscite, might have spoken of France as plunged in the lowest depths of humiliation; not suspecting how soon the capitulations of Sedan, Metz, and Paris, were to show that there was behind a yet lower deep, of which he had not even dreamed. And it is not easy to understand what motive could have prompted the forgery of these letters.

The success of Paul in preaching these new doctrines naturally augmented the anger of the Jews at his proceedings, and feeling their inability to arrest his progress by any measures of their own, they took the step of accusing him before the Roman governor. This office was filled at the time by Marcus Annæus Novatus, the elder brother of Seneca, who had taken the name of Gallio, and was known as a learned, refined, and liberal man. It is singular that here, though Paul is brought before a Roman tribunal, the offence charged against him is not political, as it had been at Philippi and Thessalonica, but that he preached doctrines contrary to the Law of Moses. There is great probability in the suggestion of M. Renan, that the real accusation was that he, being a Jew, availed himself of the privileges which the Romans conceded to Jews in their religious observances, and abused them to teach practices which were inconsistent with the Jewish religion and were forbidden by Roman law, thus forfeiting his right to protection.<sup>1</sup> But in order that this accusation should be proved, it would be necessary to institute an inquiry not only into the alleged conduct of Paul, but also into the particulars of the Jewish Law, since it was only by comparing the two that his heterodoxy could be established; and this inquiry Gallio naturally declined to institute. Had the alleged offences been of a nature to affect the public tranquillity or the rights of

<sup>1</sup> Renan, *Saint Paul*, p. 222.



individuals, the case would have been different; for these it was his duty to maintain. But a question affecting the conformity or opposition between doctrines taught by an obscure Jew, working for his daily bread, and certain voluminous writings assumed to contain the Jewish Law, was one which neither duty nor inclination led him to investigate. Accordingly, so soon as by the speech of the accuser he understood the real nature of the charge, he contemptuously dismissed it, and, we are told, saw with indifference that some of the friends of the accused assaulted Sosthenes, his accuser, as soon as he had left the court; satisfied that the officers would suppress any tumult if it arose.

The conduct of Gallio has been differently regarded according to the standpoint of the writer. But, excepting that he ought not to have allowed his contempt for Sosthenes and his absurd accusation to lead him to view with indifference an attack upon a suitor for justice within the precincts of his court, if he really did so, his conduct appears to have been both just and politic. Had Paul been accused of blasphemy against the gods, or of treason to the emperor, it might have been necessary to ascertain whether in the conduct imputed to him he had forfeited his privilege as a Jew; but such was not the form of the accusation. And if, as suggested by M. Renan he ought to have done, he had inquired into the real nature of the question involved, it is to be feared that this would have in no degree diminished his distaste for the subject, or the contempt with which he was disposed to regard the parties. For he would have found that the grounds of the dispute were, whether a Jew whom Pilate had a few years previously crucified for sedition had been raised from the dead; and whether persons, without being circumcised and keeping the Jewish Law, could be entitled to admission into a kingdom which he was to return bodily to earth to establish in a very few years, within the life-time indeed of both the accused and the accusers. And though, had he listened to Paul, he might have been struck with his views of God and duty, it is quite possible

that his own were as pure and as elevated. No doubt he saw before him a portion of the first development of a faith that was destined to sap the foundations of Roman greatness, and to efface almost every vestige of ancient civilization, without a suspicion of its latent power and ultimate fortunes. But this ignorance was inevitable. Of the myriad voices that are now soliciting the popular ear, who can foresee which one, or whether any, will find an echo in the heart of posterity, or can rightly be blamed by future writers for having failed to do so? Judging from the analogy of the past, however, we may be tolerably certain of two things with regard to that which is successful: one, that it will not be the voice which an impartial bystander would deem most deserving of success; and the other, that it will have so changed by contact with the actualities of life as to make its identity barely recognizable; not more, perhaps, than the ceremonies of the holy torch at Rome are with the simple breaking of bread in their own houses of the first disciples.

At Corinth Paul remained for a period of more than a year and a half. Hitherto it would seem that the practice of the mission had been to preach the word, and then, so soon as a church was formed in any place, to have left it to the charge of officers whom they had appointed, or whose appointment they had sanctioned, and to have gone onward on their course. Here, however, Paul continues at the head of the church—probably making it a centre from which the good news might be preached in the surrounding districts. We do not know how long Silas remained—whether he had left before Paul, or stayed after his departure. Probably the former was the case, since otherwise it might be expected that there would be some reference to him in the first Epistle to the Corinthians. That he did not leave with Paul, appears to follow conclusively from the express mention of Aquila and Priscilla, which excludes the idea that he would have been of the party. Possibly, therefore, he had left when Paul decided to remain at Corinth, instead of continuing his journey. It seems clear that any such prolonged stay in one

place was not in accordance with the original scope of the mission, from the uniform previous practice, as well as from the care which the writer takes to show that Paul had a special vision authorizing it in this particular instance. And if so, Silas might either have prosecuted his journey with some other colleague, or have returned to Antioch.

It would seem that the ultimate departure of Paul was the result of his anxiety to reach Jerusalem by a certain time, in order to the fulfilment of a vow.<sup>1</sup> He took leave of the brethren, and went down to the port of Cenchrea, and there having shaved his head, took ship in company with Aquila and Priscilla, proceeding, however, to Ephesus in the first instance. Here, once more, we are told, he began by addressing himself to the Jews and proselytes, to whom he seems to have confined his preaching; which not only failed to provoke opposition, but excited a lively interest, and led them to desire his further stay. Anxious to reach Jerusalem in time for the fulfilment of his vow at the feast, he was unable to comply with their request, and continued his voyage, arriving there and saluting the brethren; and then, having completed the requisite observances, he proceeded to Antioch.

This episode in the history has excited much controversy, many persons attributing the whole incident to the invention of the writer, in order to carry out his purpose of representing Paul as habitually observing the Jewish Law at the very time when he was most emphatically protesting against it. Certainly, no one who reads his letter to the Galatians, or that to the Romans, could conceive of him as voluntarily submitting himself to a rite of this nature. And yet it must be remembered that this was at a time when he was a delegate from the church at Antioch, and when his letters, though they seem to show that he did not preach the Law to Gentiles, contain no indications of any hostility to it in his own feelings, or that he had ceased to regard it as binding upon Jews. Doubtless he had been habitually re-

<sup>1</sup> Is it not possible that he might have been recalled by the church at Antioch?

ardless of many of the rules it was thought to impose—setting in this respect an example of freedom to his Gentile converts, with whom he would eat and drink in their own houses, asking no question as to what was set before him. But it is possible that at this time he would be anxious to show that his conduct was not intended to imply any settled disobedience, but only a temporary non-observance for the purpose of removing obstacles to the success of his mission, and therefore atoned for his transient lapses by some supererogatory act. Something of this might seem to be indicated by his subsequent language to the Corinthians,<sup>1</sup> which appears intended to deprecate just such a charge of inconsistency as we might suppose to be made when this particular act was brought to their notice. And, at least, this suggestion prevents us from peremptorily rejecting the account in the Acts. Perhaps, indeed, it justifies us in accepting it as true. Having, accordingly, in this manner presented himself to the brethren at Jerusalem as a punctilious observer of the Law, he returned to occupy once more that position in the church at Antioch which he had for the time abandoned for other duties; and, we may suppose, to render an account of the mission with which he had been charged.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 19 ff.

## CHAPTER VI.

### DISPUTE AT ANTIOCH.

No hint of any previous dissension in Church—No notice of any attempt to compel Gentiles to observe the Law excepting in letter to Galatians—Revelations and Clementines show existence of some pretender, but are silent as to obligations of Gentiles to be circumcised—Paul the person referred to in both—Question probably different from what it would appear from Paul's letter—Dispute with Peter—Incompleteness and probable inaccuracy of Paul's statements—Ordinary view of results of dispute without authority—Peter and the Jews must have upheld rule enforced by James—Dispute ended in discomfiture and departure of Paul—This evidenced even by the manner in which he refers to subject—Impossibility that Peter should have afterwards receded from his position—Opinions of disciples—Admission of Gentiles part of prophetic picture of reign of Messiah—Nature of former missions of Paul—Difficulties necessarily arising from formation of churches among Gentiles—Relations of Jews and Gentiles in the Church—Probably implied some superiority in circumcised brethren—Obstacles to receiving this view—Tendency in Gentile churches to neglect formal regulations, even decrees of Council—Effect of this on position of Society—Intervention of James—Might have had some relation to conduct of Paul—Withdrawal of previous sanction to his preaching—His position.

UP to this time there is nothing, either in the writings of Paul or in the Acts, to lead us to suppose that any dissensions existed in the Church itself. The attempt to impose upon Gentiles the burthen of the Law had been defeated by the action of the church at Antioch in bringing the subject at once before the heads of the mother church, and procuring their sanction to the existing practice; and Paul and Barnabas, and therefore all other evangelists, had been authorized to admit Gentiles by the mere act of baptism, only requiring them to practise the abstinences prescribed by the decree of the Council. It would seem, too, that the compromise thus made contained the means of permitting the free diffusion of the Gospel among all nations,



without derogating from the claims of the Law, which continued to be obligatory upon Jews, and might be recommended to Gentile converts as a counsel of perfection. If the Epistle to the Galatians had been lost, there would have been nothing in early Christian literature to suggest the existence of any disputes connected with the obligation of Gentiles to keep the Law, though we should find that the question of its relation to the Church was both important and difficult. We should see, indeed, that in Corinth there were parties who called themselves after the names of favourite leaders, and that, apparently, some teachers had questioned the claims of Paul, but we should assume that their conduct had been disavowed by the Twelve. From the Clementines, we should conjecture that there must have been some arch-heretic who opposed himself to Peter and James; and from the Revelations, that some one had falsely assumed the title of Apostle and Jew, while teaching to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols. But of the obligation of the Law upon Gentile converts we do not hear a word. There is no complaint of the burthen—no protest against its continuance—no congratulation at its removal. The Spirit denounces those who assume titles to which they have no pretension, or who permit licentious practices, or the eating of idol meats; but there is not a word of reprobation against those who teach Gentiles that they are free from the Jewish Law, or who preach uncircumcision. When, however, we turn to the Epistle to the Galatians we seem to be suddenly transported into an entirely different region. The picture of harmony within the Church is rudely marred. Peter at Antioch hypocritically refuses to eat with Gentiles, falsely alleging a conscientious scruple, but in reality yielding to a pressure put upon him by James, and carries away Barnabas and all the other Jews with him in his hypocrisy, with the single exception of Paul, who withstands him to the face, and exposes his weakness and inconsistency, while the three leading Apostles are spoken of in terms of undisguised contempt. At the same time we are led to suppose that attempts were made to

impose circumcision upon Gentile converts; which would seem scarcely to have been possible had the adjustment of that question described in the Acts really taken place. And then we find that Paul himself is the person denounced in the Revelations in the messages of the Spirit to the churches, and that he also is the arch-heretic who in the Clementines is represented as plotting against the life of James, and as resisting and vilifying Peter.<sup>1</sup> Obviously, there must have been some bitter and prolonged controversy to have provoked imputations such as these on both sides, not in the excitement of actual conflict, but months and years afterwards.

The first impression produced by the writings of Paul would undoubtedly be, that the question was throughout one of principle, involving nothing less than the obligation of Gentile converts to be circumcised, and even that Jewish brethren had been forbidden by James to eat with them unless they had submitted to the rite. But an attentive examination of the Epistles to the Corinthians shows that such could not have been the case. Not

<sup>1</sup> With regard to the latter it is scarcely possible to raise a doubt. And it cannot be more clearly shown than in the words of Dean Stanley (*The Epistles of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, p. 367), to which we may refer the reader. With regard to the Revelations, it will always be possible from the orthodox standpoint to deny that Paul was the person meant, since it will be assumed that one inspired Apostle, could not so accuse another. But, even here, there ought to be no more difficulty in admitting that John might have condemned Paul, than in admitting that Paul actually condemned Peter; and it is only requisite to assume that the obnoxious practices were afterwards abandoned, or had been abandoned previously. But from the historical standpoint, when we find that his opponents in the Church denied the right of Paul to be called an Apostle, and accused him of not being a Jew, and that he had sanctioned the eating of meats offered to idols, explicitly when the fact was not brought to the notice of the convert, and implicitly to all who had the requisite knowledge, and was accused of teaching such doctrines as, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," which would sanction any immorality, and that there is no hint of any other prominent man of that period, or indeed of any one else in the Church, against whom either of these imputations was made, and the improbability that any other person outside of the Twelve should have assumed the title of Apostle,—the coincidence in all four particulars furnishes a conclusive ground for inferring that he was the person intended. And, in addition to these considerations, we must remember that the person indicated made his claim while residing at Ephesus, and was rejected by those whom the writer addresses; and that Paul asserted his Apostleship in that city, and was compelled to fly for his life.

only is there nothing to suggest that circumcision was insisted on, but, though the church at Corinth was composed both of circumcised and uncircumcised members (1 Cor. vii. 18), the whole account of the manner in which they celebrated the Lord's Supper implies that no such distinction was observed. And yet teachers, almost certainly from Jerusalem, who impugned the authority of Paul, and set up that of Peter, or of Christ as represented by the Twelve, had divided the Church; so that if this had been the question at issue, it must certainly have been raised. Although, therefore, we can scarcely doubt that attempts had been made to induce the converts in Galatia to be circumcised, since it appears impossible otherwise that such a letter could have been written to them, yet we may doubt whether that was the real question in dispute; whether, perhaps, that might not have been the point in which the agents of the Apostles had put themselves in the wrong, and upon which Paul seized, leaving out of sight other matters to which his answer might not be so complete. For though the Epistle bears the marks of intense conviction, and conveys the impression that Paul is giving a truthful narrative of the events as they appeared to him at the moment, yet it is obviously written under the influence of strong feelings of resentment and indignation; which could not fail to blind the judgment as to the true proportion of events, and to render it impossible to do justice to the motives or conduct of his adversaries.<sup>1</sup> No angry man can rely upon his recollection of the circumstances that caused his anger, still less upon the accounts he might give of those circumstances for the purpose of vindicating his own conduct; and no one in ordinary life would dream of forming his opinion upon such an account. He would, at least, wait until time and reflection had restored calmness, and, even then, he would endeavour to learn

<sup>1</sup> A writer in the *Edinburgh Review* for April, 1870, p. 492, thus characterizes the letter: "The passionate and almost acrid expressions of a letter written almost off-hand, under great irritation—abrupt, without greeting, without salutation, breaking into 'let him be anathema,' 'whatever they were it matters not to me,' 'I would they were cut off that trouble you;'" and argues that the view it suggests is not reliable.

the other side of the question ; nor could he rely upon any conclusion he might form until this had been done. Here, however, we have nothing but the statement of Paul himself—a statement made while he is bitterly angry—made for the purpose of vindicating his own conduct by depreciating that of others—made in the absence of his opponents, and subject to no correction whatever. Yet this statement has been accepted as accurate and complete, and, accordingly, Paul has been elevated and Peter depressed in all the current representations of the history ; and more than this, it is assumed that Peter tamely acquiesced in the rebuke, and that the whole church of Antioch approved of the conduct of Paul—matters upon which he is silent. And such is the power of his language, and such the effect produced by his description of his own character and conduct, that these impressions are sure to subsist with the majority ; especially as the letter which contains our only account of the transaction is everywhere circulated as the very word of God.

Looking at it, however, merely as material for history, the only certain conclusion appears to be, that there was a violent dispute at Antioch between Paul and Peter, connected in some way with the position of Jewish brethren in relation to the Law, and probably with their conduct to Gentiles who were not believers ; and that, as one result of this quarrel, attempts were made to bring the churches which Paul had founded into conformity with established usages, and, perhaps, under the authority of the Apostles ; and as another, that Paul claimed entire independence, and to vindicate this claim assumed the title of Apostle for himself. But when we attempt to ascertain the precise grounds and nature of the dispute, we can only reason tentatively from the language of Paul. We learn from the Acts that he had just returned by way of Jerusalem from his second missionary journey as a delegate of the church at Antioch, and had resumed his position in that church ; and from himself, that Peter was there also ; whether settled there, or merely on a visit from the church at Jerusalem, must be left to conjecture. It

would only be natural, in view of the growing importance of the church at Antioch, that it should be deemed necessary for one of the Apostles themselves to reside there, or, at least, to visit it from time to time, for the purpose of regulating its proceedings. From Paul's statement, it would seem that Peter had been accustomed to eat promiscuously with unbaptized Gentiles; for we can scarcely imagine that in writing to churches, the members of which were as strictly discriminated by baptism, as the Jews were by circumcision, from their heathen countrymen, he would use the term Gentile by itself, as designating a member of the church. But it is difficult to believe this. And yet, if such were the custom in the church at Antioch, Peter might at first be reluctant to break in upon the practice on his own individual authority, and might partially acquiesce until he had obtained the opinion of James and the Apostles as to the course to be adopted, or, perhaps, until he had their sanction for putting a stop to the practice. In the Clementine Recognitions,<sup>1</sup> Peter is represented as unable to eat with a promising Gentile convert; Clement himself, until he is baptized, showing that such a restriction was traditionally reported to have been observed in the early Church. It is possible, therefore, that this was the position he ultimately assumed, and not, as we should be disposed to infer from Paul's language, that of refusing to eat with uncircumcised brethren. As the apostolical decree had been published in Antioch, and, we must suppose, was habitually observed, the chief objection to eating with men uncircumcised would be removed in the case of members of the church. And it seems improbable that in a community whose distinctive rite was a common meal, of which all who were baptized partook, there could have been a practice which rendered it impossible that they should eat together at other times.

We must, however, remember that, after all, an analogous impossibility would often exist among the Gentile brethren themselves. Those who met at the communion-table might be of

<sup>1</sup> Recog. i. 19.



different ranks of life, or even separated by distance, and either of these circumstances might present as effectual a bar to their eating together upon other occasions as a difference of status in relation to the Church. In reality, therefore, there might be no greater ground of jealousy in seeing a Jew withdraw himself from ordinary meals, than in seeing him abstain from swine's flesh; so long as this did not imply any derogation of the rights of the members within the Church itself. The question, in fact, might have been, whether believing Jews, by reason of their residence in a Gentile city, where the majority of the brethren were uncircumcised, were freed from the ordinary obligations of a Jew in respect to matters outside the rites of the Church. And if so, we can well understand that, in view of the position of the brethren in Jerusalem, and in accordance with their convictions, this question was settled in favour of the observance of the recognized custom of the nation. It is, indeed, quite possible that some greater strictness was required in order to repel the imputations to which the Church could not fail to be exposed by reason of the conduct of Paul; for he could not have provoked the enmity of the Jews in every place which he visited by his conduct as an agent of the society, without to some extent implicating the whole body in his unpopularity. And this result would probably be experienced more strongly in Jerusalem than elsewhere.

But whatever had been the previous practice, and whatever were the reasons that induced James to interfere for its suppression—and whether the measures taken for this purpose were invited by Peter, or imposed upon him—they commended themselves to him and to all the Jewish brethren, including Barnabas, and, there can be no doubt, to the whole Church. There is something strangely unreal in the account given of the transaction by orthodox writers—Conybeare and Howson, for instance. They first, against all probability, suppose the dispute to have taken place immediately after the Council at Jerusalem, though this is implicitly negatived by the story in the Acts, which can-

not be supposed to have mentioned the visit of Judas and Silas, and to have suppressed that of Peter, if it had really occurred; and even still more strongly by the tone of the letters to the Thessalonians. Next, they suppose that the very church which had just recognized the authority of the Apostles and elders at Jerusalem in matters of discipline, by invoking their decision in an analogous question, set at naught this authority, backed as it was by Barnabas, Judas, and Silas, at the mere protest of Paul; and, finally, that Peter and all the Jewish members of the church of Antioch broke with James and the church at Jerusalem, by reverting to the practices just recently abandoned at their command, at the suggestion of a man who only a few weeks previously had formed one of a deputation to Jerusalem, the very object of which implied the rightful supremacy of the leaders of that church! Such could not have been the course of events. The dispute could not have taken place while Judas and Silas were there, or before Paul's departure with Silas, unless we accuse the author of the Acts of conscious dishonesty, not merely of omitting to record an important incident, but of purposely so writing as to exclude its occurrence. It would be in the highest degree improbable, too, that immediately after the position of Gentiles in the Church had been authoritatively settled, either Peter would have disregarded a rule which he had concurred in establishing, or James have endeavoured to recall a concession which had been made at his individual recommendation. And it is utterly impossible that Peter—the rock on which the Church was built—the acknowledged chief of the Apostles—backed by the authority of James, the Bishop of Jerusalem, and supported by the unanimous approval of all his fellow-countrymen, should have respected the protest of a man so far inferior to himself as Paul would be regarded.<sup>1</sup> Nor, probably, would Paul at that time have ventured upon such a protest.

<sup>1</sup> This is well shown in the letter from Clement to James, prefixed to the Clementine Homilies, where Peter is thus described: "Simon—who was set apart to be the foundation of the Church, and for this end was by Jesus himself—named Peter; the

But if we suppose the scene to have occurred two or three years later, the matter becomes at least partially intelligible. There had been time for laxities of practice to grow up in Antioch, where the concession of freedom in some particulars might well lead to its assumption in others. And just in proportion as the Church was enlarged by the accession of new members, would the points of contact with unbaptized Gentiles be multiplied; for many of the converts would have a husband or a wife, or parents or children, or, at any rate, near relatives and connections, who still remained outside the Church. And this would augment the inducements to waive all merely formal restraints on intercourse. To what extent these practices had gone, and how far Peter shared in them, we do not know, any more than the extent to which Paul's personal character and his conduct in Gentile cities were involved in the question. We may be sure, however, that whatever the practice might be, it was regarded as violating the obligations to which Jewish brethren continued to be subject. And so soon as the church of Jerusalem was informed of its existence, they would naturally require that James should interfere; and he would, as a matter of course, adopt whatever measures might be necessary for the purpose. He, accordingly, sent messengers to Antioch, who recalled the Jewish brethren to their duty; and this provoked from Paul, who remained constant to his opinions, a vehement attack upon Peter.

As we know nothing of the occurrence, excepting from Paul, and as he contents himself with denouncing the weakness and hypocrisy of Peter, and describing the language in which he refuted him, we can only conjecture the result. Orthodox commentators, as we have seen, assume that Peter submitted meekly to the public rebuke, acquiesced in its justice, and abandoned the line of conduct that had called it forth. And this assumption is

first-fruits of the Lord; the first of the Apostles; to whom first the Father revealed his Son; whom the Christ with good reason blessed; the called and chosen of Christ, and his associate in journeyings and at the table," &c. What could Paul have had at the time supposed (when not even one of his Epistles had been written), or at any time, to set against these admitted claims?

necessary to their position; for they are compelled to conclude Paul to have been altogether in the right, since he declares himself to have been so in the "Word of God;" and they cannot allow that Peter continued in a course thus condemned. But such reasoning, though doubtless correct enough from the supernatural standpoint, has no value whatever from the historical. And even upon orthodox grounds it has the inconvenience of implying, that though Apostles were infallibly accurate in those speeches and writings which the Church has preserved, they were capable of any amount of error in whatever they said or wrote that has perished. Thus not only Peter, but Barnabas, though they had had the Holy Spirit poured out upon them at Pentecost, were wrong in their conduct; and James, representing the church of Jerusalem, most of the elders of which had shared in the same outpouring, was wrong in his, probably written, instructions to them, because their speeches and writings have not been recorded; and Paul, who had only received the Holy Ghost mediately through the instrumentality of Ananias, who had not even claimed at the time to be an Apostle, was absolutely right, because his version of the transaction has found a place in the New Testament! So that the test of inspiration is, not Apostleship, nor the gift of the Spirit, even directly, but the accident, or providence, of the records of their acts, or the writings in which they were justified, having been admitted into the canon. Recently, indeed, M. Renan has adopted a similar view. But such a result is in the highest degree improbable, not only from a consideration of the circumstances of the Church at the time, and the relative position of the parties to the dispute, but even from such hints on the subject as we possess. The tradition to which M. Renan himself has referred, that the Christians at Antioch were afterwards divided into two churches under separate bishops, one claiming to derive his ordination through Peter and the other through Paul,<sup>1</sup> is of itself an implicit contradiction of this assumption, and almost a proof

<sup>1</sup> Apost. Const. B. vii. 46.

that the dissension was permanent. And this view is confirmed by the silence of Paul, and by what we know or may infer of the character of Peter.

Those who have assumed the complete triumph of Paul, can scarcely have considered the light in which this assumption places his conduct. For it represents him as dwelling afterwards upon a momentary aberration, acknowledged and atoned for almost immediately; taking advantage of it to describe Peter as a hypocrite, condemned by his own act, and whose insincerity was proved by his habitual disregard of the very Law he was then endeavouring to impose upon Gentiles; without even a hint of his willing admission and reparation of his error. And we have no right to impute to Paul such wilful injustice. And in the case of Peter, the improbability is equally great. He may, indeed, have been weak under some aspects. The conduct attributed to him on the present occasion, of first eating with Gentiles and afterwards withdrawing from them, appears to imply that he was; and the reported denial of Jesus,<sup>1</sup> and his inconsistent utterances at the washing of feet, show that such was his character in early Christian tradition; but the weakness which leads a man to questionable compliances, rather than wound the feelings of his associates or provoke a breach of union, is quite consistent with the sternest and most unyielding attitude, when the period of compromise has passed and it becomes necessary to take a side. And he certainly was not wanting in eloquence or self-assertion. He was not, therefore, likely to have submitted in silence to a public rebuke from a person so much his junior in the Church—one whom he had admitted to an inferior share in the ministry—and whose pretensions and position in the society were so far inferior to his own, but who, nevertheless, assumed to set his individual opinion against the authority of the Apostles and the consenting voice of the leaders of the Church. No doubt

<sup>1</sup> Is it possible that this could have been a symbolical representation of his temporary defection at Antioch, and his subsequent repentance when reminded of his duty by James?



there was much vehement and bitter controversy, and we may be sure that it ended in the defeat and withdrawal of Paul, and of the few who adhered to him.

That such was the case is even indicated by the account in the Acts, which on the two former occasions of Paul's leaving Antioch is careful to show that he left in company with a known and trusted brother of high standing in the community, and that he was set forth by the prayers of the Church, but which now leaves it to be inferred that he departed alone and unrecognized. And it is suggested also by the bitterness with which he afterwards refers to the incident. If his single voice had recalled Peter and the rest to a sense of their duty, and had freed the church of Antioch from the yoke, as he conceived it, which James, through them, was seeking to impose, he would surely have looked back to the event with feelings of complacency rather than of anger. Nor could he, in that case, have acquiesced in the general justice of the description given of him by the false teachers at Corinth, that his letters were weighty and powerful, but that his bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible, any more than they could have dreamed of thus describing him. The man who, single-handed, had openly defied the authority of the Apostles, and had by his eloquence and firmness persuaded so important a church to refuse obedience to their requisition, could neither be weak in presence nor contemptible in speech. No greater or more difficult task, indeed, could have been accomplished by any Christian of that time; for it would have been to contradict the fundamental dogma of the Church, that it was "built upon the foundation of the Apostles." And we may suspect that if it had been accomplished, and the authority of the Apostles had been successfully defied by one who claimed individual authority resting upon private revelations to himself; any immediate gain would have been far more than counter-balanced by the shock thus given to the unity of the Church. But it appears impossible that this could have been the result.

M. Renan finds a basis for his views in the difference which

he assumes to have existed between the character and opinions of James and those of Peter. The former of these it pleases him to describe as a sort of Jewish bonze, the very incarnation of narrow-mindedness and bigotry; and the latter as a good, easy man, of moderate intellect and kindly feelings, who is soon wrought upon to take harsh measures, but who just as soon falls back into his habitual indifference, willing to make almost any concession for the sake of maintaining peace in the Church—"ce bon Pierre," he calls him. But this view certainly receives no support from the Acts or from the writings of Paul. For the latter, so far as they draw a distinction between the two, do so to the advantage of James, who is nowhere accused of hypocrisy or time-serving. Nor do these writings contain a word to indicate any bitterness of feeling against him, while it is impossible to overlook the strong personal dislike to Peter exhibited in the letter to the Galatians. And there can be no doubt that this feeling must have been reciprocated by Peter, who could not but resent the language in which Paul had publicly assailed him; and, still more, his subsequent denunciation to the Church in a writing that must have been widely circulated. Henceforth, so far as we know, they never met; and if they had, it could scarcely have been as friends.<sup>1</sup>

And if Peter had afterwards receded from the position he had assumed at Antioch, in compliance with the suggestions of James, this must have been known to Paul. In that case, even if he did not choose to modify his censure by treating the conduct he had condemned as a momentary lapse from right principle, he could scarcely have failed to seize upon it as an additional proof that the party of the Apostles did not themselves attach any value to the rules they sought to impose upon others. And not only Paul, but James and the brethren at Jerusalem, must have known of it also; and they would have been doubly

<sup>1</sup> If we could accept the second Epistle of Peter as genuine, it would seem that he had outlived his resentment; but probably no critic—certainly not M. Renan—would cite that work as an authority upon the question.

indignant at this relapse into the original error, and certainly would not have silently acquiesced in the defection. But of this there is not a trace in early Christian literature, which, on the contrary, everywhere presents a picture of unbroken harmony among the Twelve, and especially of entire concord between Peter and James. How, if this had been the case, could the former have been selected by the author of the Clementines as the chosen representative of James and the Church, the especial opponent of Paul, whom he follows for the purpose of encountering and exposing? In the Apocalypse also the churches are warned against false Apostles and pretended Jews; but these are outside of the Twelve, who are the foundation of the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem; and Justin and Hermas attribute the evangelization of the world to their combined action. This suggestion, therefore, of the subsequent renunciation by Peter of the position he had taken, is purely gratuitous; resting upon arbitrary assumptions and supported by no authority whatever. There is far more intrinsic probability in the picture drawn in the Clementines, in which Peter is employed as a delegate from the church of Jerusalem, to correct the errors into which so many of the Gentiles had been led by the teaching of Paul, and to bring them back to the true faith.

But then the question naturally arises, What was that faith; and in what particulars had the previous preaching of Paul differed from that sanctioned by the Twelve? And to these questions it appears impossible to furnish a complete or satisfactory answer. For the letter to the Galatians, which is our principal authority on the subject, though it shows what were Paul's views at the time it was written, does not enable us to ascertain what his previous teaching had been, excepting, perhaps, negatively. We may partially learn from it what he had not taught, but can only draw doubtful inferences as to the positive aspect of his doctrine. For this we must, apparently, rely upon his two letters to the Thessalonians, and upon his reference in those to the Corinthians as to what they had learned from him, and, to a

certain extent, upon his speeches as given in the Acts. But the former sources are obviously incomplete, and the latter is liable to grave suspicion. Still, by combining these various indications, and comparing his doctrines as thus deduced with the views of the Church at the time, we may, perhaps, discover an approximate answer.

There can, of course, be no question that the first disciples were exclusively Jews; and as little, it would seem, that they regarded Jesus as the Messiah, the anointed King whom the prophets had foretold, the Son of David who was to sit upon his throne at Jerusalem, and the Son of Man under whom the people of Israel were to obtain their rightful pre-eminence and supremacy. This view, however, did not exclude the idea of preaching the good news to the Gentiles; for the prophets had almost uniformly made their calling a prominent feature in the picture of the Messianic era. The resurrection of Jesus was the first scene in that great drama of which his re-appearing was to be the climax; so that they were living in the last days. The end of the world had come upon them; and this was precisely the period in which the adhesion of the nations to the worship of Jehovah, and their admission into the kingdom of his anointed, were to occur. We should, therefore, be prepared for some recognition by the church of Jerusalem of the claims of Gentiles to a share in the preaching of the word, if only in the form of their approval of measures which might have been taken for the purpose; for it would have been at variance with one of the essential conceptions of the kingdom of heaven if Gentiles had been refused an entrance. The terms upon which they were to be admitted, and the position they were to occupy, might form causes of dispute; but not, it would appear, the fact of their admission.

According to the account in the Acts, neither the first mission of Barnabas and Saul, nor the second mission of Paul and Silas, was exclusively or primarily a mission to Gentiles. In both cases, the missionaries are represented as habitually addressing

themselves to Jews in the first instance, visiting the synagogues on the Sabbath for the purpose, and only turning to Gentiles when the former rejected their doctrines, and refused to submit to be baptized into the name of Jesus. But it is implied that Gentiles would as a matter of course have been invited to become members of any church formed among the Jews, and we may suppose that as soon as the Gospel had been proclaimed in the synagogue, some measures would be taken to proclaim it also to all who would listen. And whatever might be the conduct of the Jews in any city, that did not prevent the preachers from offering the Gospel to them first in the next place they might visit. This procedure, indeed, appears inconsistent with Paul's later claims to have been set apart from the very moment of his conversion to preach to the Gentiles; but a brief reflection may suffice to show that no other course could have been adopted, since the Jews as a people had not done anything to forfeit their right to admission to the kingdom. They formed the whole of the parent society, and they must have been an important, and probably the preponderating, though not perhaps the most numerous, element in the church at Antioch, which they had founded, and over which they continued to preside.<sup>1</sup> Paul, therefore, as sent forth by the latter church, could not have justified, either to himself or to them, a total ignoring of the claims of the Jews. And unless they had been so ignored, the offer of the kingdom must be made "to the Jew first," and only afterwards to the Gentile. If, after he had elaborated his system with regard to the worthlessness of the Law, Paul was compelled to admit that the Jew, by reason of his being circumcised, had much advantage every way, we may be sure that at this time not only the church, but he also, would regard his claim to have the Gospel first preached to Jews as incontestable.

So far, at least, our conclusions appear reliable, since the statements in the Acts are corroborated by a consideration of the position of the Church at the time, as well as by passages in

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiii. 1.



some of Paul's own writings. But then it is natural to suppose that, even in the church itself, the Gentile could not be regarded as upon quite an equal footing to the Jew, unless he became a proselyte of righteousness. Even if there had not been any precise definition of his position, some superiority must surely have been conceded to those who, being of the chosen people, had believed in Jesus and had been baptized into his name; as well as to those who had become entitled to the privileges of Israel by complete obedience to the Law. And it is quite possible that there might at this time have been two orders in the church—analogous in some aspects to the distinction which exists in Congregational churches between those who are admitted as members and the general body of the congregation—though probably a truer analogy might be found in some of the secret societies, where all become brethren and entitled to the privileges of the order by the act of initiation; but there are mysteries connected with the higher degrees which are imparted only to those who have attained them.

We may seem to be here in the region of mere conjecture. But there are facts in the history of the Church that lend at least some plausibility to the surmise. Jews were still expected to observe the Law, "to walk orderly;" and there were some restrictions upon their intercourse with Gentiles; and Gentile converts were recommended to become circumcised. So far as concerned the Jew, it is scarcely possible to believe that the obligations to which he was liable did not carry with them some corresponding advantages; for if he did not escape his obligations by being baptized, so neither would he forfeit his privileges. Had the Law been abrogated, then the two sections of the Church would meet on equal terms; but if it continued to be binding on the Jew, his position would be hard and unequal unless its observance entailed some compensating superiority. But if such were the case, he could not meet the Gentile brother upon a footing of absolute equality in all relations and under every circumstance. At the common table and partaking of the

commemorative feast, the two might communicate, and both be acknowledged as brothers; but there must have been some exclusion, it would seem, even in the church itself—something reserved for the circumcision alone, and in which the uncircumcision was not allowed to share. Or, if this should be denied on the ground that there could not have been any difference of status within the church itself, then it would seem that equality within the church did not imply equality elsewhere, and that the circumcised brethren must have formed a society of their own outside of its organization. This, however, appears to be negatived by the other circumstance to which we have referred, that circumcision was at least recommended to the Gentiles; since if they could gain nothing within the church by submitting to the rite, it is not easy to understand upon what ground the recommendation could be made. For if it should be said that they might thus secure a higher place in the kingdom, this surely must answer to some elevation of position in the church; its type and precursor.

We have a double difficulty in realizing such a state of things. In the first place, we look at the question exclusively in the light in which it is presented by Paul—not as one of discipline, affecting merely the relative status of members in the society, but as one affecting their position in relation to God and heaven. This latter aspect was no doubt indirectly involved, but it was not that under which the subject would be regarded by the leaders of the Church. They would admit, or rather assert, for it was their fundamental doctrine, that every baptized brother, by the fact of his being initiated into the society, would not only be saved from the coming wrath, but would be sure of an entrance into the kingdom of heaven. They would not, it is true, assign to all an equal share in its dignities; for their conception of the kingdom was so far modelled upon their human experience as to suggest differences of rank and degree corresponding to those with which they were familiar, and depending upon previous conduct or status. All might “shine as stars,” but still “one

star would differ from another star in glory." And one of the determining elements of this ultimate position would be the relation which the believer, while on earth, had sustained to the Law. As, however, this was a matter upon which no doctrine had been formulated, room would be left for innumerable shades of opinion. That with which the Apostles and elders were concerned was the order of the Church, and especially the maintenance of the obligations and privileges of the Jew, and the exclusion of every practice that might derogate from these.

Such a view conflicts with that generally taken, and which at first sight we should be inclined to adopt. Not only is it opposed to those orthodox preconceptions which have determined the prevailing opinions with regard to the beliefs and conduct of the Apostles and leaders of the Church, but it conflicts with the almost inevitable tendency to view them under the light reflected upon them by its later history. The former have led historians to see in those whom Paul denounces only an obscure minority—scarcely, indeed, even that—rather a few obscure individuals, disavowed by the Apostles and speedily reduced to submission, or at least to silence; and to assume that the opinions of the Apostles themselves were substantially identical with those taught by Paul. We shall have to examine this question more fully hereafter; but apart from all other considerations, it would surely have been a most unwise display of independence, under the circumstances, that Paul should have rested his condemnation of their practices upon his own individual authority, when he might have invoked that of the Apostles and church of Jerusalem in aid. Admitting that there is nothing in the Epistle to the Galatians to assert, or even directly to imply, the action of the heads of the church in the measures of which he complains, surely it is implied indirectly by the care which he takes to affirm the peculiar nature of his own call to the Apostleship, and the independence and authority of his doctrines as having been revealed to himself individually. These claims are significant and appropriate, if we suppose that he stood alone, but would

be worse than unmeaning if, as is generally assumed, his views were shared by the Apostles, or even by Peter. Whatever weight might be attributed to the doctrines taught by Paul upon the ground that they had been revealed to him by Christ in a vision, they must have acquired additional authority if sanctioned by those, or by one, especially by the chief of those, who had been taught by Christ, not in dreams and visions, but face to face, and whom he had chosen as the witnesses to his teaching. And much as Paul may have valued his independence, we have no right to suppose that he would peril the triumph of principles to which he obviously attached so much importance, merely for the sake of asserting it unconditionally. If, therefore, he never claims the present sanction of the Apostles to the doctrines he enforced, this, we must suppose, could only be because such a claim would have been unfounded.

And there is the further difficulty arising from our altered position. From the height of our Christian freedom we look down with contempt upon the "beggary elements" of the Law, and hardly admit the idea that there ever could have been a time when these were regarded as necessary adjuncts to a belief in Jesus. Scarcely can we transport ourselves in imagination to the period when a few obscure Jews, believing in Jesus as the Messiah who was to restore the kingdom to Israel, went forth to invite men of every race to share with them in the glories and enjoyments of that kingdom. So soon, however, as we realize this state of things, we see that the Jews were necessarily pre-eminent, and their Law invested with a living force and authority. As the Church in its origin consisted of none but Jews, and as the first preachers addressed themselves solely to Jews, the very admission of Gentiles was an act of condescension, implying the bestowal of a favour and the practical waiver of a privilege. The coming kingdom was to be a Jewish kingdom. Its expected Lord and Ruler had not only been a Jew, but he had himself, during the time of his sojourn on earth, conferred dignity upon the Law by the scrupulous fulfilment of its com-

mands. The Jew, therefore, could not but possess some superiority; nor could the claims of the Law be altogether ignored; rather, it must have been regarded as essentially sacred—not, indeed, imposed as a necessity, but urged as a desirable consummation of the Christian profession, and, probably, as essential to the complete realization of the Christian ideal. To deny this would seem to contradict the whole spirit of the history, and to refuse to draw the obvious inferences from the language of Paul; for the one shows that Jewish believers, even Paul himself, were regarded as still subject to the Law; and the other, that attempts were made to induce baptized brethren to submit to circumcision—attempts which would have been unmeaning, unless the opinion of the Church had been such as we suggest.

Such a posture of affairs was necessarily full of difficulty. So long as Jews formed the majority, or even a noticeable part of a church, this, however, would be scarcely felt; but when churches were formed in Gentile lands, which would be composed in some instances exclusively of Gentiles, and in many of which Gentiles would from the beginning constitute the preponderating element, the exclusive privileges of the Jew, whatever they might be, and even the distinction between the two classes, would tend to be obliterated. The Jews who allied themselves with Gentiles in forming these separatist bodies, would be looked down upon with something of contempt by their more conservative brethren,—much in the same way as, half a century ago, and perhaps still in England, a country gentleman would have been who had become, e. g., a Baptist, and worshipped at the pantile-house in his village—and doubtless in many cases would be finally excluded from the synagogue.<sup>1</sup> And while the majority would shrink from such a consummation, and be consequently restrained from joining the new sect, those who, nevertheless, persevered would be compelled to lean more and more upon their new associates,

<sup>1</sup> The passage, John ix. 22, no doubt expresses the fixed practice among the Jews at the time it was written, and, probably, for some time previously. But it would not have been the case at first, unless the whole story in the Acts is a fabrication.



and be induced to waive all distinctions that might stand in the way of their complete union. So that the inevitable tendency would be to diminish the number of Jewish brethren in such churches, and to render those who still remained faithful less scrupulous in maintaining the due separation between themselves and the others.

We are able to see something of this tendency in the letters of Paul. In those to the Thessalonians, as we have pointed out, there is no allusion to the Law; and in those to the Galatians and Corinthians we learn that he had taught the non-observance of the Sabbath, and had not even enforced the prohibition against eating things offered to idols. And, in Corinth, we can scarcely doubt that the incident which is described as the Jews opposing themselves and blaspheming, was in substance the expulsion of himself and his companions from the synagogue. But then, living, as they would be compelled to do, almost exclusively with Gentiles, it would well-nigh be a necessity that they should eat with them, and probably with any guests at their table, upon a footing of equality; to them without the Law becoming as themselves without the Law, and partaking freely of whatever was set before them, without inquiring whether it had been bought in the market-place. Probably, too, they would eat in the same manner at the table of promising catechumens, and even of those who were mere inquirers. And we may surmise from the expression in the letter to the Galatians,<sup>1</sup> that such had been the practice of Barnabas and himself on their previous journey, and that it was continued, though possibly with some reserve, on their return to Antioch.

In this case, however, bearing in mind the intimate relations that subsisted among the Jews, their frequent changes of residence, and their habitual visits to Jerusalem, news of this conduct would be sure to reach that city, and it could not fail to excite disapprobation among the brethren, and to provoke unfriendly comments in the majority who had not joined the

<sup>1</sup> Gal. ii. 13.

church. It must even affect the security of the society. No Jewish sect could exist in peace or safety in the metropolis of their religion, if it was understood that adhesion to its doctrines freed Jews from their obligation to obey the Law. But no such stimulus would be needed in order to provoke the action of the leaders, since the brotherhood would be as much scandalized at the reputed practices as any in the place. For it was not a complaint of transient laxities, such as might be occasionally inevitable, and for which due reparation might be made, but of a systematic disregard and disparagement of the Law by one of the most prominent agents of the society; and that not in one place only, but in many—wherever, in fact, he had penetrated. Not only in Thessalonica, Berea, and Corinth, but in all the cities of Pamphylia, Galatia, and Asia, in which he had preached, he had taught and exemplified the freedom of believers in Jesus from all legal observances; and it would seem also that he and some, though we cannot say what proportion, of the Jewish brethren were now pursuing a similar course in Antioch. Under such circumstances, it was impossible that the church at Jerusalem should remain neuter, and impossible also that they could adopt any other course than they did. We may assume that eating with Gentiles was one of the matters involved; but it is probable—indeed, well-nigh certain—that the actual question more nearly concerned Paul and his previous proceedings than we should at first infer; that it involved, indeed, his continued recognition as a missionary agent; this being made to depend upon his promise to abandon his former practices and to enforce the decrees of the Council,—concessions which he refused to make. It must remain doubtful in what manner and to what extent Peter was implicated in the objectionable practices; but it is obvious that he was the leader in the measures taken to repress them, and that a bitter quarrel between himself and Paul was the result; Paul refusing to submit to the authority of James and the elders, and accusing Peter and the rest of the Jews of insincerity and ill faith in doing so.

Such conduct on his part must have severed the connection between himself and the Apostles, and could not but have caused a revocation of the sanction he had previously obtained from the three chief among them. It is even possible that the previous withdrawal of that sanction may have been one cause of the position which Paul assumed. And there would be strong grounds for such a course on the part of Peter and James.<sup>1</sup> It is obvious that James at least remained faithful to the Law, and did not consider that a Jew, by reason of his joining the society and being baptized into the name of Jesus, became free from its obligations; and all our evidence shows a substantial harmony between him and Peter. If, therefore, Paul, while acting on their behalf, had systematically violated the Law, and had, moreover, omitted to enforce obedience to those decrees which he had been commissioned to deliver to the churches—and both of these seem to have been the case—they could not any longer permit him to act as their delegate. And the personal obligation to disown him would be reinforced by the necessity of satisfying the just remonstrances of the brethren at Jerusalem, who would be grieved and angered by the report that a recognized agent of the society had caused such scandals both by his own practices and by the licence he had allowed to his converts. Certainly, Paul could not be sent forth a third time without some expression of regret for his past irregularities, and some promise of amendment for the future, and these we may suppose he refused to give.

It is quite possible that Paul's recent experiences, first at Athens, and afterwards at Corinth, in the former of which places he had certainly been alone, and probably at the latter also after the time of the vision which we are told directed him to remain there, had inspired him with confidence in his power to teach independently, and had made him feel that his success was likely to be greater when untrammelled by the presence of a

<sup>1</sup> We must leave out John, for we have no information whatever with regard to him; but there are no grounds for doubting his entire agreement with the other two.

colleague to whose counsels he was expected to defer. He might, consequently, regard with indifference the threat to withdraw the commission with which he had been entrusted, if he did not even welcome it as affording the means of asserting the independence and freedom for which he longed, but which he could scarcely assert without some such pretext. He would, therefore, decline to concede anything to the demands made upon him; and, we may assume, would be formally disavowed. And then he would go forth to preach the Gospel as he conceived it, without check or control. It is noticeable, however, that during this period of independent action he does not break up new ground. It is while acting as a delegate from the church at Antioch, the preaching member of missions which they had organized and despatched, that he proclaims the Gospel from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum. Now he only proceeds through districts in which churches have been already established,—to Ephesus,—where he and others had already preached; and he remains there for upwards of two years, and afterwards only revisits the Troad, Macedonia, and Greece. And as it had been during his prolonged stay at Corinth that he found leisure to write the two letters to the Thessalonians, so it is during his residence at Ephesus that he writes those to the Galatians, and the first to the Corinthians, and probably also that to the Romans.

## CHAPTER VII.

### EPHESUS AND EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.

Paul leaves Antioch alone and unrecognized—Necessity of new basis for his teaching—Assumes title of Apostle—Departure from Antioch final—Apollos at Ephesus—Questions suggested by account of his position in the Acts—Leaves for Corinth—Arrival of Paul at Ephesus—First act to administer rite of baptism—Probable motive for act—Scantiness of our materials—Date of Epistle to Galatians—Probably after arrival at Ephesus—Certainly before letters to Corinthians—Parties in Church opposed to Paul in Galatia and Corinth—They dispute his title of Apostle—This implies that they claimed to represent Apostles—Nature of question at issue—Claim of Paul to a special revelation inconsistent with authority of Apostles—Ephesus the main seat of the conflict—News arrives of perversion of Galatians—Letter to Galatians probably intended for use in Ephesus also—Main question was Paul's authority to teach—That authority previously derived directly or indirectly from Apostles—Paul could not otherwise have obtained a hearing at first—Withdrawal of sanction of Apostles necessitated claim to independent authority—Feelings under which the letter to Galatians was written—Letter vindicates Paul's claim to originality and independence, and claims sanction of three leading Apostles—Contemptuous reference to them—Attack upon Peter—Effect of letter upon opponents—Jude—James—Language of Paul unjustifiable.

ONCE more, and for the last time, Paul departed from Antioch for the purpose of revisiting the churches he had founded, and of preaching the Gospel in new fields—but, apparently, under what different auspices! On the first occasion, there is assumed to have been a special command from the Divine Spirit to separate Barnabas and himself for the work; and after fasting and prayer and laying on of hands they set forth on their journey. On the second occasion, he is separated, indeed, from Barnabas, but he is accompanied by Silas, a man whose high position in the Church is evidenced by his having been shortly before accredited as the representative of the Apostles and elders at Jerusalem, and he is again commended by the brethren to the Divine



favour. Now, however, we are told simply, that having spent some time at Antioch he departed;<sup>1</sup> leaving us to infer that there was not one person of standing among the brethren who was willing to be his companion, and that the Church could no longer recognize him. But this isolation obviously did not shake his convictions, nor did it lessen his confidence in himself and in his cause. He felt that a necessity was laid upon him to preach the Gospel, and he went forth in the full persuasion that the truths he was commissioned to proclaim would be powerful, not only to turn his hearers "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God," but also to maintain themselves against all the efforts of his adversaries. It was nothing to him that the Apostles and the Church condemned his practices and contradicted his doctrines, so long as he was assured that they had been revealed to him by God or by Christ. In the strength of that assurance he could confront not only mortal but heavenly opponents—not only the chief of the Apostles but an angel from heaven, and could equally anathematize either. But he found, as so many have found before and since, that the world is less easily moved than in his first enthusiasm he had hoped, and that prejudice and authority present an almost impregnable front to any one who assails them. And after a few years of unavailing struggle, he was glad to purchase peace by an act of public recantation. Nevertheless, here, as in so many other instances, time and circumstance produced the change which argument had failed to accomplish; and, probably within little more than a generation, the principle for which he had striven silently took possession of the Church.

There is no period of the life of the Apostle upon which we should be more desirous to obtain full details than this; and there is scarcely any, of which we have any account at all, where our information is so meagre. It is true that the letters to the Corinthians contain hints as to the nature of his position at Ephesus, and as to the embarrassments that surrounded him

<sup>1</sup> Acts xviii. 23.

after leaving that city; but these are vague and indefinite, and we learn nothing from the Acts, upon the topics which chiefly interest us, to fill up the void thus left. All that we can do, consequently, is to attempt a conjectural restoration of his career at this time, which, though necessarily incomplete and uncertain, may be accepted as approximately accurate.

As Paul had openly defied the authority of James, the head of the church at Jerusalem, and had quarrelled with Peter, the representative of the Apostles, he could no longer claim to teach with their authority, even if that had not been explicitly withdrawn. It was, therefore, needful for him to find some other basis for his assumption of the work of the ministry, for founding new churches, and for regulating the affairs of those which had been already established—at least in cases where the authority of the Apostles, or of one of them, was invoked against him. He might preach Christ to whomsoever he would, but it would be open to any one to deny the orthodoxy of his doctrines if he spoke in his own name. And he found this basis in the assumption of the title of Apostle for himself. The Apostles had received that designation because they had been sent forth to proclaim the good news of the coming kingdom,<sup>1</sup> and he to whom God himself had revealed His Son that he should preach him to the Gentiles, and to whom Christ in a vision had confirmed the appointment, must surely have a right to the same designation. But it is uncertain whether he took this title from the time of his first leaving Antioch on this last journey—whether the assumption was not rather forced upon him by the denial of his right to teach when he had been repudiated by the Church, and when the commission with which he had been once entrusted by the Twelve had been withdrawn. Probably the latter was the case; for until taught to question his authority, the churches that he had founded would naturally assume that he continued to occupy his original position. When he passed over the countries of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening the disciples,

<sup>1</sup> Matt. x. 2, 7.

if he did so, we may suppose that they would obey him without question; for they would not have heard anything of the rupture at Antioch, and he would come clothed to them with the same sanction that he had previously possessed. Nor is it probable that he would himself have introduced the subject, thus needlessly unsettling their minds.

We have no means of determining the period of his departure from Antioch; but it is not probable that he would have remained there longer than he was compelled after the breach with Peter, for he was a man to feel sensitively the change in his position, and in his relations to the Church which that breach must have occasioned. And it would seem that when he did leave, it was with the conviction that the parting must be final. From both of his former journeys he had returned to the city, obviously regarding it as his head-quarters; but now he feels that even here there is no place for him, and we see that after his contemplated journey to Jerusalem he proposes not to revisit Antioch, but to visit Rome.<sup>1</sup> And inasmuch as the brief period which the one would have occupied could in no respect interfere with the other, the only reason that can probably be suggested for the intended omission would seem to be that he knew he would be no longer welcome.

Some uncertainty, too, rests upon the reported visit to the churches of Galatia, since there is no reference to any such visit in his letter to them, which was almost certainly written after his arrival at Ephesus. And it must be conceded that the authority of the Acts for the events of this particular portion of the history is very small. Still, considering the occasion of that Epistle, and the feelings under which it was obviously written, we cannot safely conclude that any given event did not happen merely because it is passed over in silence. And it would, perhaps, be natural that Paul should have taken the opportunity of visiting these churches for the purpose of renewing friendships he had formed when he founded them, and of confirming the

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xv. 23.

disciples in the faith; especially as they lay in the land route to Ephesus, which city he appears to have fixed upon as the termination of his journey. We may therefore, perhaps, accept the statement of the Acts as so far accurate. In that case, however, it would certainly seem that he had been altogether silent as to the existence of any division between himself and Peter or the Church.

During the time occupied by these events, the work of preaching the Gospel at Ephesus appears to have been carried on by Aquila and Priscilla, and by Apollos, "an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, and instructed in the way of the Lord," and yet only knowing the baptism of John! It is not easy to understand this. How was it possible that the writer of the Acts could regard any one as instructed in the way of the Lord (= Jesus as the Messiah), and yet not know of baptism into his name? It is true that there was a substantial resemblance between the baptism preached by John and that preached by Peter on the day of Pentecost, for both were "baptism for the remission of sins;"<sup>1</sup> but Peter required his converts to be baptized into the name of Christ. And it seems impossible that any one should have preached Jesus as the Christ, as it is certainly implied that Apollos did, and not have himself been baptized into his name, or even have known that such baptism was requisite. These are difficulties which our materials do not enable us to solve, and which, therefore, we can only indicate. We are told that, being fervent in spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, speaking boldly in the synagogue; that the way of God was expounded to him more perfectly by Aquila and Priscilla; and then, wishing to pass into Achaia, that the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him. We see, too, that afterwards he is recognized by Paul as having watered the seed which he had planted in Corinth; implying, apparently, a substantial agreement between the doctrines taught by the two. This is the only mention of his name in the Acts, which is silent

<sup>1</sup> Luke iii. 3; Acts ii. 38.

as to the circumstance of his return to Ephesus and subsequent association with Paul.

The difficulties we have thus indicated appear to be increased by the circumstance that the writer is silent as to his reception into the Church. He could not have been baptized previously into the name of Jesus, and it seems impossible that a person who had not been admitted into the society by baptism could have been accredited by the brethren at Ephesus to the church at Corinth, or that he could have occupied a prominent position as a teacher in that church. The probable explanation is, that he was baptized in the church at Ephesus, for the mention of "brethren" in that place implies almost necessarily the existence of a church there; but then why should the writer have omitted all mention of the occurrence? This omission, however, though apparently unaccountable, cannot, it would seem, outweigh the opposite improbability that he should have been more perfectly instructed in the way of God, without having joined himself to the church, and that without baptism he should have been accredited by the brethren at Ephesus to those at Corinth. And though we can scarcely regard the omission as accidental, since it appears directly connected with the conduct attributed to Paul on his arrival at Ephesus, it is probable that the writer would consider the fact to be sufficiently implied in his narrative, since all Christians would know that no one could be recognized by the Church until he had submitted to the rite.

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, having completed his work of visiting the churches in Galatia and Phrygia, directed his course to Ephesus, where on his arrival he must have found a church already established, but, apparently, only composed of Jews and proselytes, and not yet separated from the synagogue. Such, at least, is the inference we should draw from the Acts, though feeling how unreliable are its statements; for the entire omission of any notice of the dispute at Antioch, or of its results, is of itself sufficient to show that we must not here expect a complete or impartial history. And yet the dispute itself, and



Paul's claims in consequence, must have been present to the writer's mind, since the first act attributed to Paul on his arrival appears to have been introduced for the express purpose of giving an implicit support to his assumption of the title of Apostle; and that in especial connection with the claims of Peter and John, and in a manner to exhibit his superiority over Philip. It will be remembered that when Philip is reported to have preached the Gospel in Samaria, the gift of the Holy Spirit is only imparted to his converts when Peter and John are sent down from Jerusalem; and they confer it by the laying on of hands. And now Paul is described as finding disciples who knew no baptism but that of John, and who have not even heard whether there is any Holy Spirit, but whom he baptizes into the name of the Lord Jesus, and upon whom he confers the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands; thus at once placing him upon a level with the two chief Apostles in this eminently apostolical function, as the writer represents it. It is, perhaps, needless to ask how it could happen that persons who know only the baptism of John could be regarded as disciples.<sup>1</sup> It appears, too, at first sight, inconsistent with the position subsequently taken by Paul in writing to the Corinthians, where he rather appears to depreciate the importance of baptism, and to congratulate himself upon having baptized so few among them, that he should commence his ministrations in Ephesus by baptizing twelve persons as the indispensable preliminary to their receiving the Holy Spirit at his hands. We must, however, remember the difference of his position in the two places. In Corinth he had been the preaching member of a mission, of which, as we have seen, Silas was probably the head, or, at least, the person to whom was specially confided the power of admitting converts by baptism. That Paul should accordingly depreciate the function of his colleague in comparison with his own, should set preaching above baptism, was not, perhaps, unnatural under the circumstances. In Ephesus,

<sup>1</sup> Acts xix. 1—3. The same word is used as that employed (Acts xviii. 27) to designate the members of the church at Corinth.

he was not only acting independently of others, but he was claiming to be an Apostle. He would therefore not only assume to administer baptism, but he would attach its fullest importance to the ceremony; so that he might seize the first occasion to vindicate his title to admit members by this rite, in a manner that might call the attention of the brethren to the circumstance. It is quite possible that the story as we have it does represent some real occurrence, and that it may have been derived from Paul himself. And it will be seen that it is so framed as to exhibit the validity of his baptism, shown by its conferring a capacity to receive, as well as his apostolical power to impart, the Holy Spirit.

With this incident commences the imperfect narrative of Paul's labours at Ephesus. In spite of everything that had gone before, he began, we are told, to preach in the synagogue, and continued this practice for three months, when he separated the disciples and established a distinct congregation in the school of one Tyrannus. And then for the greater part of three years, during which time he continued to remain in the city,<sup>1</sup> we learn nothing excepting the miraculous powers imparted to "handkerchiefs or aprons" by contact with his body, so that they alone, without any act on his part, and even without any special volition, healed diseases and cast out devils;<sup>2</sup> and the testimony borne to him by an evil spirit,

<sup>1</sup> Acts xx. 31.

<sup>2</sup> It must be admitted that there is much force in the Rev. Dr. Newman's argument founded on this. If contact with Paul's body imparted such virtue to woven fabrics, must not daily and hourly contact with the body of God, when he lay as an infant in the arms of Mary, and drew life from her bosom, have imparted ineffable virtue to her? But, nevertheless, this argument appears to have two defects:—1. The virtue imparted to the cloths was proved by their healing power, and there is nothing in the New Testament or in early legend to show that the body of Mary ever exercised any such power. 2. Paul repelled all worship to himself, though his body possessed this miracle-imparting faculty; much more would he have condemned a worship of articles which had only derived their virtue from contact with him. And what would the old Christian Apologists have said to such an argument, who laughed at the Pagans for believing in Jupiter as a god, when they could show the place of his birth and burial, and believed that he had been suckled by nymphs, or by a goat?

which ignominiously routed seven brothers who attempted to exorcise it in the name of that Jesus whom Paul preached, and the effect produced upon the believers in magical arts by this incident, until we come to the tumult in the Temple of Artemis, which immediately preceded his departure. We cannot profess to fill up the void, but we may supply some additional materials.

It can scarcely be questioned that, subsequently to the dispute at Antioch, there was a party in the Church opposed to Paul, that denied his authority and contradicted his teaching; for it is impossible to refer the corresponding efforts made in the churches of Galatia, and in those of Corinth and Ephesus, to mere individual action. And there can be little doubt that it must have commenced very soon after his departure from Antioch. Probably the very circumstance of his refusal to submit to the requirements of James, coupled with his leaving for Galatia and Phrygia, which must have been speedily known, would suggest the necessity of adopting measures to enforce, as it would be deemed, needful order in these churches. If we could fix the date of the Epistle to the Galatians, that would aid us in determining the question; but this is very difficult, and the various conjectures that have been formed on the subject show the uncertainty in which it rests. M. Renan, for instance, supposes it to have been written at Antioch before starting for Ephesus; while others, such as Messrs. Conybeare and Howson, suppose it to have been written after the second to the Corinthians, and thus more than three years later. To us, however, it appears impossible that it could have been written at so early a time as assumed by the former. We cannot imagine that Paul would have remained in Antioch for a sufficient time after the dispute to have allowed the emissaries of James, as M. Renan supposes them to have been, or, as we should rather suppose, delegates from the church, whether of Jerusalem or of Antioch, to visit the scattered churches of Galatia, and to win them over to their side, and for the news

of this to have reached Paul. The means of intercommunication were scanty and infrequent, and the rate of travelling for those who journeyed on foot, or availed themselves of the small vessels that plied along the coast, was necessarily slow. Probably, therefore, some months would have been required for the purpose. And it must be remembered that James and the church at Jerusalem could not have anticipated any opposition from Paul, any more than from Barnabas and the other Jews, who had given in to the obnoxious practices; rather, indeed, they might naturally expect a readier acquiescence on his part, for had he not just before evinced his willingness to submit to the Law by the vow he had taken upon himself? so that, assuming the movement to have been organized by James, he could not have mapped out the proceedings beforehand. It would not be until he had received intelligence of the unexpected resistance to the decrees of the Church that he would contemplate any further measures; and there could be no such special importance attached to the churches in Galatia as to suggest that they should be first visited, unless on the ground that Paul had previously gone among them for the purpose of securing their adhesion to himself. The Epistle, too, obviously implies that Paul's assumption of the title of Apostle had been attacked, and it is in the highest degree improbable that he could have assumed this title at Antioch, where he had originally occupied a subordinate position which of itself contradicted the claim, and where he had never discharged the functions of the office. It would not be until he found himself in a place in which he was performing the work of an Apostle that he would openly assume the name; and not until it had been assumed by him would his right be denied by others. The manner, also, in which he refers to the dispute at Antioch suggests a greater lapse of time than is consistent with the hypothesis we are considering; and it suggests as well that the letter was written from another place. And further, from the historical point of view, the tone of the letter, the topics which it embraces, and the nature of the argu-

ments employed, indicate a more mature phase of the discussion than it was probable could have been reached so soon after its commencement.

But if the letter was not written before the departure from Antioch, it seems equally improbable that it could have been written after the two to the Corinthians. There is one circumstance which of itself appears decisive upon this point. When Paul writes to the Corinthians, he is contemplating a journey to Jerusalem, and is desirous that the various churches established through his instrumentality should make contributions in order that he might take them with him. We learn from the first of these letters that he had given instructions to the churches in Galatia to make regular collections for the same purpose, and we see in that to the Romans how full his mind was of the subject. It appears impossible, therefore, that he could have written to the Galatians between the two last-named letters without any reference to the collection, or to his previous instructions, or to his contemplated journey. And, obviously, the letter to the Galatians belongs to an earlier stage in the conflict, when he was full of confidence in himself and his cause, and had no thought of seeking a solution of the question between himself and his adversaries at the hands of the church at Jerusalem. We must then suppose the letter to have been written during his stay in Ephesus, and that it was probably the first letter written on the subject of the controversy.

We learn, then, that in Galatia and in Corinth, places where he had first preached the Gospel, and we can have little doubt that the same was the case in other places where churches had been founded by him, there were persons who not only taught different doctrines from those which he had preached, but who assailed his person and denied his authority; dwelling especially upon his unwarranted assumption of the title of Apostle. And though this might result from the objection that would be felt by the members of any society to the unauthorized use of a title which implied authority in the body, yet it is probable also



that, as Paul had assumed the name of Apostle because that supplied the needful support to the doctrines he taught, and to the rule he asserted in matters of faith, so his opponents denied his right to that name for the same reasons. But this implies that the practices which they recommended or enforced in opposition to him, rested, or were assumed to rest, upon the authority of the Twelve. It would not have been enough to deprive Paul of the adventitious support which his doctrines received from this borrowed title, unless they could allege the sanction of the true Apostles in aid of their own teaching; since otherwise the very same reasoning which they urged against his right to teach might be retorted with at least equal force upon themselves. And we can hardly suppose that any persons would voluntarily place themselves in so absurd a position. Those whom Paul denounces as preaching another Gospel (which was after all not another) could not, consequently, have preached upon their own authority; while there was no recognized authority within the Church but that of the Apostles, which necessarily they must have invoked; and Paul does not even by implication contend that they were not justified in this. On the contrary, his emphatic assertion of independence and originality is only intelligible on the ground of the existence of differences between the leaders of the Church and himself. It was on this account that he assumed the special revelation made to himself to have superseded all previous revelations, and to have enabled him to speak with supreme authority. The contest, therefore, was essentially one between Paul and the Twelve, and equally so whether any of the Twelve individually took part in it or not. Almost equally so, indeed, whether there was any substantial difference between the doctrines severally taught by them and by himself; since he not the less claimed to have received a peculiar revelation which constituted the infallible standard, and any departure from which, whether by an Apostle or by an angel from heaven, made the preacher accursed. The test, therefore, of doctrine was not what Jesus had taught

in his life-time, nor what he had communicated to the Apostles in his interviews with them after his resurrection, nor what the Spirit of truth had imparted to them when he came to guide them into all truth,<sup>1</sup> but what Christ had long afterwards privately revealed in a vision to Paul himself. But this pretension reduced the Apostles to insignificance, and made their office superfluous, and even injurious; for it is not pretended that the doctrines taught by Paul were identical with those taught to them by Jesus. It was one, then, which they necessarily resisted, and we may be certain that the persons who were engaged in the contest at least possessed their sanction and were authorized to speak in their name.

It is improbable, however, that Paul should have at once assumed this extreme position: this must have been the claim he ultimately found himself compelled to make in order to justify his opposition to the Apostles, or to those who professed to represent them. They who had known Jesus, and had been taught by him during their daily companionship, who had listened to his discourses to the people, and had been admitted to a knowledge of the inner truths which his public teaching was designed to symbolize, were necessarily supposed to be entitled to speak in his name; while Paul had never known Jesus. Some means were requisite to vindicate his claim to independence, and they were found in the special revelation made to himself, and in his own Apostleship; matters of which we hear nothing in his letters to the Thessalonians. And so with other matters. It would be objected to him that he knew nothing but what he had learned from the Twelve; that he had recognized their authority in the matter of the Council at Jerusalem, and in that of the circumcision of Titus; that it was they who had sanctioned his mission to the Gentiles; and, doubtless, many other objections were urged which we might trace in his various letters if we had the requisite clue. To all of these objections it was incumbent upon him to find answers;

<sup>1</sup> John xvi. 13.

and these answers would again be met by fresh objections, for such controversies are in their nature endless.

There can be little doubt that the principal, if not the original, scene of the conflict was Ephesus itself. It is true that the writer of the Acts is silent upon this subject, not indicating the quarter in which the opposition to Paul arose; but that very silence affords an indirect confirmation of the opinion that it arose not from the Jews outside of the Church, but from the party of the Apostles within. On all former occasions when Jews are the opponents, the origin of the quarrel and the fact that they are the parties is distinctly marked.<sup>1</sup> But here, though it is said that Paul taught for three months in the synagogue, and afterwards, because some "were hardened and believed not, but spoke evil of that way, he departed from them and separated the disciples," there is nothing to show that the Jews were the parties who believed not; and the last phrase is rather appropriate to a division among the disciples themselves, than to their being separated from persons outside of the body. And after that there is no hint of any opposition to him, excepting such as might arise from his successful preaching of the Gospel; and this, we are told, ultimately produced a riot, directed, not against him individually, nor even against the Jews that preached Jesus, but against the whole body of Jews in the city. We see, however, by his letters to the Corinthians how much opposition he had encountered, and what dangers he had run; and it appears only natural to refer these to the same agency that attempted, as he felt, to pervert the faith of his converts; but, as his opponents conceived, to enforce needful discipline and to bring them into "the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship," and thus into complete communion with other churches. And we may be certain that these men would have encountered him in Ephesus. They would not follow his traces in Galatia and Corinth, and leave him to propagate his doctrines unopposed in so important a city. In all probability, indeed,

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiii. 46, 47, 50, xiv. 2, 5, 19, xvii. 5, 13, xviii. 5, 6.

the separation of the disciples and the daily disputations in the school of Tyrannus were consequent upon their opposition, the former having been the almost immediate result of their arrival.

While immersed in these disputes, and possessed by the angry excitement that unceasing conflict engenders, news reached Paul that the same party which was opposing him in Ephesus had endeavoured, not without success, to "pervert" his followers in Galatia; and he at once availed himself of the opportunity to write a letter which should vindicate his own character and pretensions, and set forth with an approach to completeness (probably as completely as it was then formed in his own mind) the basis of his doctrine, as well as the arguments by which he defended his position. For even he could not rest his case solely upon his own peculiar revelation. He must show that this revelation was conformed, not indeed to the teaching of Jesus, for upon this ground he never ventures to meet his enemies, but at least to the Jewish Scriptures, whose authority he perforce recognized. The topics upon which he dwells and the illustrations he employs were doubtless those to which he had been accustomed in his daily disputings—answers to charges which his opponents made against him, and to the arguments they used; and possibly the letter might be intended almost as much for the use of those by whom he was surrounded, whether adherents or enemies, as for that of the Galatians. Marks of vehement anger are apparent throughout, and we can scarcely suppose his mind to have been so ill balanced as to be roused to this ungovernable mood by the mere news of the defection of some, or even of the most part, of his former friends in Galatia; or that the action of men whom, according to the current hypothesis, Peter would repudiate, could have revived with such intensity the feelings at first produced by their quarrel. We can, indeed, scarcely otherwise account for the familiarity which he assumes his readers to possess with the Scriptures, so that they are expected to understand allusions which to the mere cursory student

would be unintelligible. Nor would it be likely that the news from Galatia, however it reached him, would have been sufficiently precise to have indicated the exact nature of the charges against himself, or the grounds upon which the emissaries of the Apostles justified their course. But if we suppose that the action in Galatia was the result of the same agency by which he was at the moment opposed in Ephesus, and that the letter to the Galatians, though intended primarily for them, was nevertheless to be employed as a manifesto in Ephesus itself and its neighbourhood, then the whole Epistle becomes at once intelligible. We see the Apostle's standpoint, and can thus account for the feelings displayed and the topics selected.

As the Epistles to the Thessalonians teach us substantially what was the Gospel that Paul preached at Corinth, so this to the Galatians shows that which he now preached at Ephesus; and it shows us also the nature of the question at issue between himself and his opponents as it appeared to himself. But it does not enable us to know how it appeared to them. We may, indeed, be sure that their views upon this point differed essentially from his, and we may conjecture, from the analogy of other disputes, that the points which he selected for attack were not those to which they attached the chief importance. But it can scarcely be doubted that the main question related to his right to teach upon his own individual authority; since this was, under the circumstances, vitally important, affecting the discipline and possibly also the unity of the Church. Hitherto, according to the Acts, there had been invariably a recognition of the authority of the Apostles, and links by which the activities of the Church, even in the case of Paul,<sup>1</sup> had been connected with them. At Antioch, where the church was first formed, Barnabas was despatched from Jerusalem to complete its organization, and presumably to act as its president, or, to use the technical word, bishop. Afterwards, when by his means the church is established, he takes Paul from a position of obscurity to occupy,

<sup>1</sup> Excepting in his first preaching at Damascus.



apparently, a subordinate office in that church,<sup>1</sup> which shortly afterwards despatches both Barnabas and Saul on a missionary journey. Then, questions having arisen as to the obligations of the Law upon Gentile converts, there is a formal recognition by the church at Antioch, and by Paul himself, of the right of the Apostles, in conjunction with the elders of the church at Jerusalem, to determine the extent of that obligation; and, after they have decided, two leading members of that church are deputed to Antioch to communicate the decision. After this, Silas, one of the two, accompanies Paul upon his second missionary tour, and they are again sent out under the auspices of the church at Antioch. It is not important to inquire how far Paul intended to recognize the superiority of the Apostles, or how far his actual conduct, especially during his second journey, contained an implicit assertion of independence; for to the Church, the circumstances that we have enumerated would be conclusive proof that he acquiesced in his own inferior position, that he did not claim, indeed, to be permitted to go forth, excepting in conjunction with a person holding originally a high office in the mother church, and specially accredited from the Apostles. It may be that Paul chose Silas as his companion; but the very choice would appear to the church at Antioch as a recognition of the authority of that at Jerusalem, and, possibly, was so understood by Paul. He could not at that time have had any motive for asserting his individual authority in opposition to that of the Twelve, and without such assertion he must accept or select an associate who possessed the requisite qualifications, one of which, and possibly the most important, might be a direct delegation from them. Nor does it matter for this purpose that Paul became, in fact, the guiding spirit of the party. Neither Barnabas nor Silas would object to being cast into the shade by the superior zeal, tact, energy, and eloquence of their companion; for were they not fellow-labourers, working for a common cause and

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiii. 1. There are prophets and teachers, and as Saul is mentioned last in the list, we may assume that he belonged to the latter class.

possessed by a common spirit? They would be satisfied to fall into a less prominent position, allowing him to take the lead in speech and in council; but no doubt exercising a salutary restraining power, moderating his tendencies to extreme opinions and conduct, and keeping him to some extent within the limits prescribed by the authority they both recognized.

This view of the position of Paul is undoubtedly very different from that which we should frame from his own statements; especially from those made to the Galatians. But not only is it supported by the account in the Acts, when that is carefully analyzed; it is the only view consistent with his own history and the state of the Church. It is impossible that the sometime persecutor should, on the faith of a vision known only to himself, have been at once admitted in the church of Jerusalem to an equality with the Apostles, especially on the ground that he was to preach the kingdom to the Gentiles. For from his own account such a vision had been too common to confer any peculiar or exceptional dignity on the person to whom it was vouchsafed; and at that time the admission of Gentiles as such was not even contemplated. The account of his first visit to Jerusalem given in the Acts shows how different was the traditional view of his relations to the Church and the Apostles from that which they assumed in his own recollections, and, doubtless, more nearly represents his actual position, viz., that of a person to whom no recognition could be granted until he had been vouched for by a trustworthy brother. And certainly nothing could have occurred, previously to the dispute at Antioch, to invest him with that equality. The exclusive mission to the Gentiles with which he claims to have been entrusted by the three leaders of the Church, though probably answering to some real occurrence, could not have been such as he describes; for it would have shut out the Twelve and their agents from a field of labour proved to be unexpectedly promising, to make it over to two individuals who, in the very nature of things, must have been inadequate to the task, if only from the disproportion be-

tween their individual powers and the almost limitless sphere of effort supposed to be confided to them. And even in these first ages of the Church, we may be certain that there were distinctions of office and function clearly marked and recognized, especially in the case of the Apostles. And though, with this single exception, a brother might pass from one grade to another, his elevation would be due to the choice of his superiors, or to that of the Church ratified by them, and not to his own act or assumption.

Paul, however, by his resistance to the decision of the Church, must, in the opinion of the rulers, have forfeited his right to teach in their name, and he could scarcely deny their competency to withdraw the sanction originally given. But he could not on that account consent to relinquish a work of such vital importance, for which he was so eminently qualified. It could not be that men so erring could have it in their power to forbid him to preach the one true God and salvation through His Son Jesus Christ to the thousands who otherwise would never hear the Gospel. The revelations vouchsafed to himself, and the gifts of the Spirit with which he had been endowed, were to him convincing proofs that his mission had been sanctioned by God, by whom he had been thus enlightened and gifted. And what better proof of Apostleship could there be than the Divine bestowal of the qualities needed for the efficient discharge of the duties of the office? If apostolical authority were required in order to entitle his doctrines to be received as true, such authority might be found in his own assumption of the title; nor would he be deterred from taking this step by any feelings of reverence to the Twelve. The transition would be easy, indeed, from resisting their authority, to claiming an equal authority for himself. But that he felt compelled to make this assumption, shows the importance attached to the apostolical office, and indicates the difficulties in which he was necessarily involved, since, if he was to be obeyed because he was an Apostle, he could not easily question the right of the elder Apostles to a

similar obedience. The very claim, then, upon which he based the divine origin of his own doctrines, necessarily involved at least an equal title to a divine origin in those of his opponents. This, however, was a consequence not thought of in the first instance by either party. The only effect that the assumption of the title would produce upon his adversaries—everywhere in the Church, indeed, excepting among his immediate followers—would be a burst of indignation at the presumption, and even the profanity, of the act, which would be universally denounced.

But to this denunciation Paul opposes an uncompromising front. In his letter to the Galatians he not only asserts boldly his right to the name, but he so asserts it as, apparently, to claim not equality merely, but superiority, to the older Apostles, since they had been appointed by the human Jesus during his earthly life, but he by the risen Messiah, and by God the Father. Having done this, he proceeds, after anathematizing his opponents in language which implies a high position in some one among them, to assert his independence and originality, and to vindicate that resistance to the authority of the Apostles in the person of Peter with which he was charged. It is noticeable that in this letter, for the first time, we find an acknowledgment of his having been himself a persecutor of the Church—a fact left out of sight in former letters, but now introduced, presumably, because it had been made a subject of accusation. But his primary object is to assert his originality. With this view he declares that the Gospel which he preached was not taught him by any man, but was directly revealed by Jesus Christ; and, in confirmation of this assertion, he describes himself as having immediately after his conversion retired to Arabia, and only three years after having visited Jerusalem, for an interview with Peter, with whom he stayed but a fortnight, seeing none other of the Apostles, with the possible exception of James, the Lord's brother.

We may judge of the importance he attaches to this disclaimer

of all influence or information from the Apostles, from the fact that he confirms his statement by an oath.<sup>1</sup> No doubt the account, literally taken, is far from fulfilling its purpose, since it would be open to cavillers to say that, having while in Damascus been instructed by Ananias in the fundamental Christian dogmas, these were afterwards elaborated and corrected by the teaching of Peter, for which, with an apt pupil, a fortnight would be abundantly sufficient. And they would also say that whatever in Paul's preaching was original, was, and must be, a conception of the true doctrine thus taught, resting merely upon his own uncorroborated assertion of a special revelation to himself. And they would argue that any such revelation was itself incredible, since it could not be supposed that Jesus had chosen during his life-time twelve persons to be the depositaries of his doctrine, and had afterwards on a memorable public occasion endowed them with the Holy Spirit for the purpose of proclaiming it, and that he had subsequently revealed himself privately to Paul for the purpose of enabling him to teach a different doctrine. The descent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost had taken place in the face of the church, who had witnessed the display of the gifts it conferred, while no one knew anything of the manifestations to Paul but what he had himself told them; and his wonder-working faculty had been exercised, not perhaps privately, but among Gentiles, and rested only upon the report of himself and his associates. But though arguments of this nature were sure to be employed, and sure also to produce a marked effect, yet the solemn asseverations of Paul, backed by the influence of his character, would prevail with very many, who would refuse upon any grounds to believe that a claim thus urged could be unfounded. There would, consequently, be a party which continued to adhere to him; and with the faculty which men possess in most matters, and especially in religious, of believing two incompatible propositions, by the simple process of not bringing them together for direct comparison, or, when

<sup>1</sup> Gal. i. 20: "Behold, before God I lie not." Comp. James v. 12.



that is impossible, by assuming that if we knew more we should be able to understand how a thing could be and not be at the same moment, they would soon learn to reconcile their belief in Paul with their belief in the other Apostles.

From this assertion of independence and originality he proceeds to claim a recognition of both from the leading Apostles; two of whom, Peter and James, were afterwards involved in the dispute at Antioch; and the third, John, was, it may be, at this time conducting the opposition against him at Ephesus. Of course it is possible that the three names are introduced simply because these were, in fact, the leaders of the church in Jerusalem at the time of the visit, and with no ulterior purpose. But it must be remembered that the letter which contains the account is not a colourless historical narrative, intended only to inform those who were previously ignorant of the subject. It is a vindication, and in part an apology; but it is also an attack. The object of the Apostle is not merely to show that he was right, but to convict those whose authority was invoked, and probably exerted, against him, of error and ill faith. And so great a master of his art as Paul was, did not, we may be sure, introduce any particular without a tacit reference to the subject of controversy—a reference which we can only imperfectly trace, but which would be abundantly plain to his readers. These three, then—James, who directed the proceedings against him—Peter, who had been his opponent at Antioch—and John, who a few years later congratulated the church of Ephesus upon having proved him to be a liar—had, he assures his readers, been made acquainted with the very Gospel which they were now opposing, and had relinquished to him and Barnabas the field of the Gentiles, into which they were now intruding themselves. And, after all, what were they? They seemed to be pillars—they seemed to be somewhat—they were chief among the Apostles—but they added nothing to him in conference; and whatever they might be, it mattered nothing to him: God did not, and therefore he need not, attach any importance to their apparent

position. Still, whatever they were, they had recognized the essential equality of himself and Barnabas, sending them to the Gentiles upon the same footing as they occupied toward the Jews. So that by implication they are made to sanction Paul's claim; since, as they sought to evangelize the Jews by virtue of their Apostleship, the concession of the entire Gentile world implied certainly a corresponding rank in the persons to whom it was made. The reply of John to this claim we have already indicated; that of Peter is probably contained, in substance, in the Clementines, and we shall subsequently see that of James in their final interview at Jerusalem. But posterity has ratified Paul's claims to the title, not caring to scrutinize the manner in which it was conferred, but deeming it well earned by the services he has rendered to the Church. And we may accept the ratification, feeling that in truth the marks of an Apostle were seen in him.

From this he passes to the contest with Peter; and here again he exhibits his indifference to rank and authority when invoked in support of practices which he condemned. He withstood Peter, although his conduct was suggested by James, and was approved and imitated by all the Jewish members of the Church. But, in describing the scene, he gives free course to the angry feelings by which he is possessed. Peter was condemned by his own act; he was a hypocrite, not even observing the rules he attempted to enforce, and all the Jews were in this matter hypocrites together with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy, and Paul publicly made this accusation against him. The charge of insubordination, therefore, which the emissaries of the Apostles now attempted to fasten upon himself, was only another proof of the weakness of those who were put forward as the leaders of the Church, and a justification of his own conduct; for while they, from fear, or from a desire to stand well with their fellow-countrymen, had sought to impose upon Gentile converts the obligations of the Law, he had vindicated for these latter the true principles of Christian freedom. Even for Jews, to whom the Law had been given, its

fulfilment could not bring salvation, for by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified. To impose it upon Gentiles, therefore, was not only a needless interference with their liberty as brethren, but tended to withdraw their attention from the true method of safety. And having thus explained and justified his resistance to the authority of the Apostles, he proceeds to vindicate his doctrinal position by arguments drawn from the Hebrew Scriptures.

Although, however, the alteration in his position necessitated a treatment of the subject under a different aspect, it is very possible that his fundamental teaching remained the same. He still preached the one true God who had raised his Son Jesus from the dead, and who was about to judge all the world by him, when all who had believed in Jesus and had been baptized into his name would be raised to everlasting bliss; he still preached righteousness, temperance, and the coming judgment; but, as he preached these without reference to the requirements of the Jewish Law, even in those particulars upon which the Church had insisted, it was necessary for him to find some reply to those in the Church who urged its claims. And, as often happens, the point in dispute, though confessedly of inferior importance, gradually assumed a greater seeming magnitude, until at last it almost occupied the entire field of vision. Still we may believe that as the controversy died out, these temporary elements would shrink to their true dimensions, and the weightier matters of the Law, love to God and love to man, would resume their superiority.

The despatch of this letter, whether, as appears to us probable, a copy was kept for circulation in Ephesus and its neighbourhood, or whether, as would otherwise be certainly the case, a copy was sent from Paul's adherents in Galatia to their friends in Ephesus, and by his opponents to the leaders of the party in Jerusalem and elsewhere, could not but provoke resentment and indignation. The one visible bond of union in the Church at the time was the Apostolate. The Apostles had been the selected

recipients of the doctrine of Jesus; they were regarded as the only source from which any authentic account of that doctrine could be derived; and, as his chosen companions and the witnesses of his resurrection and ascension, a halo of dignity and of sanctity surrounded them. They had suffered in the early persecutions of the Church, one having even been slain, and they had kept alive the name and the cause of Christ when Paul was exerting himself to the utmost to crush out both. Even if it were true that they were now willing, for the sake of that cause, to concede non-essential points in order to conciliate the Jews, they had endured imprisonment and confronted death rather than yield one point that was essential; and he, Paul, had been welcomed and accredited by the two very Apostles whom he now singled out for especial attack, at a time when he could not venture to show his face publicly in Jerusalem. And yet he dared to claim, not equality only, but superiority to them; to despise their office, dispute their authority, and contradict their teaching; and even to curse in the most emphatic manner men whom they had accredited, and by inference themselves also, because they preached what Jesus himself had taught! No doubt there was another side to these facts, and we may well be glad that Paul thus vindicated for all believers the right to maintain individual convictions in the face of any authority, however seemingly sacred; but this must have been the light in which his conduct appeared to the party of the Apostles, if not to the Apostles themselves. We cannot, therefore, be surprised if he should be described as one "crept in unawares;" "ungodly;" "turning the grace of God into licence;" "denying the only Lord God and Jesus the Messiah;" inasmuch as he despised the Law which the one had given, and the Apostles whom the other had appointed; one "despising dominions," and "speaking evil of dignities;"<sup>1</sup> and certainly, however diffi-

<sup>1</sup> Jude 4, 8. See also the implied condemnation of Paul in depicting the language in which Michael resisted Satan, with a tacit reference to that in which Peter had been attacked.

cult it may be to suppose that one Apostle, as we now regard Paul, could be thus designated by another, it cannot be denied that these epithets have a singular appropriateness to his position as regarded by his opponents. Nor can we be surprised to hear from James, in grave and weighty language, such sentences as these: "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;" "If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, deceiving his own heart, that man's religion is vain;" "The tongue is a little member and boasteth great things;" "The tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison: therewith bless we God, even the Father, and therewith curse we men, that are made after the likeness of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing;" "But above all things, my brethren, swear not; let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay, lest ye fall into condemnation."<sup>1</sup> And we may be certain that these were only samples, and by no means the most forcible, of the writings directed against him; since any in which his name was mentioned would in the end be regarded as apocryphal. And the uttered invective would be even more unmeasured. Nor can we deny that the indignation was in a great measure deserved. It is impossible to justify the language of Paul; nor can we doubt that he must afterwards have deeply regretted being betrayed into so unseemly an exhibition, and must have resolved as far as possible to guard against any repetition of the language; for such violence, so far from being necessary to his cause, could only play into the hands of his opponents. Accordingly we find that on the next occasion on which he is called upon to address a church, solicited by teachers

<sup>1</sup> James i. 19, 26, iii. 5, 8, 9, 10, v. 12. There can be little doubt that the letter was directed against Paul, and that it was called forth by that to the Galatians. It is true that many of the topics appear to us to have no relation to the points of difference between the two; but, 1, we know too little of the ramifications of the contest to draw any argument from this; and, 2, though the letter was called forth by a particular controversy, there was no reason why it should be confined within its limits. It would rather comport with the position of James as the acknowledged head of the Church that he should embrace all the particulars in which the brethren might appear to stand in need of exhortation or warning.



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from the party of the Apostles, he maintains a tone of self-command and dignity; vindicating, indeed, his own pretensions, and defending his own principles and conduct, but not assailing the persons of his adversaries; deprecating dissension; rebuking disorder; rising to a lofty flight of eloquence in depicting the virtue of Christian love (alas that he should have so often fallen below his own ideal!) and the hopes of immortality; and laying down principles of universal application upon almost all the topics that he discusses.

Before the occasion of writing this next letter, however, a period of probably more than two years had elapsed, full of incident, and marked, doubtless, by many alternations of fortune; but of which, unhappily, no record has been preserved. We can only, therefore, attempt to suggest the general outline of events, and the results to which they tended.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### EPHESUS AND FIRST EPISTLE TO CORINTHIANS.

Motives of Paul's stay at Ephesus—Character of city and inhabitants—Facilities for preaching the Gospel and watching over churches—Continued opposition to Paul—Advantages in preaching at first—Subsequent embarrassments arising out of his claims—He urged, apparently, incompatible pretensions, comity and independence—Account of his reception at Jerusalem shows dissatisfaction of Church with his proceedings—Possibly measures not directed against him, but only part of usual agencies of Church—State of church at Corinth shows necessity of supervision—Peter probably at Corinth—Effect of his visit, or of visit of those who professed to speak in his name—No attempt to enforce circumcision—Interference with practices sanctioned by Paul calculated to exaggerate licence among his followers—Letter to Paul asking advice—His reply in first Corinthians—Object and character of letter—Apparent recession from extreme pretensions—Idol meats—Though question of daily importance, no previous rule laid down by Paul—His present decision condemns his former silence—Observance of Lord's Supper—Object of Paul—His claim to special revelation suggests that his views differed from those of the Twelve—His view agrees with that of Synoptics, but differs from that apparently held by first disciples—Uncertainty on the subject—Christian love—Resurrection—Doubts of Corinthians—Nature of Paul's argument—Baptism for the dead—All baptized would share in resurrection—Only saints raised—Fate of unbaptized left undecided—Charisms—Description of their nature and exercise not suggestive of Divine influence—All in the Church will be saved.

THE prolonged stay of Paul at Ephesus was, no doubt, chiefly due to the importance of the city as the capital of the province of Asia, and a principal centre of commerce, and to the facilities thus afforded for preaching the Gospel and for maintaining a correspondence with other churches. Ephesus, like Antioch and Corinth, was a place in which a large floating population existed, recruited from many different countries, and it was especially a place of resort for merchants and travellers from the East. But it had also a distinctive character, resulting from its old historic associations, which had remained unbroken, and from its almost

immemorial possession of the shrine of Artemis, to whose worship successive temples had been devoted, the two last of which were esteemed among the greatest marvels of the world. The state of society, judging from the literature of the time, would appear to have been very similar to that which Boccaccio has depicted of Florence, and which many modern French writers tell us of Paris. And the Greeks were accustomed to speak of "Ephesian tales" in much the same tone that a class of English writers employ in regard to "French novels." We may assume that there was an aspect of society which justified this reputation; but it would be as unjust to judge the Ephesians as a people by these representations, as it would be to judge the Parisians. They were a busy, thriving community—orderly, industrious, and eminently devout. It is true that their devotion was misplaced, but for this they could scarcely be held responsible. They worshipped the (or a) virgin under the name of Artemis, instead of Mary, and they designated the Supreme Ruler of the world Zeus, instead of Jehovah. Their worship, however, was natural; for, as they believed, under the fostering guardianship of these deities the city had enjoyed many centuries of prosperity, not without interruption, but always having emerged with undiminished vigour from any temporary disaster to resume its former career.

The foundation of the city belongs to the mythical, or at least to the legendary, period of history; but during the greater part of its existence it had been subject to the rulers of the surrounding territory—Lydian, Persian, Macedonian, and ultimately Roman. Through all the vicissitudes of these empires it had preserved its municipal organization and its peculiar worship, and, together with these, it had maintained its character for commerce, manufactures, literature and art. The consolidation of the Roman power had led to the almost complete extirpation of the Cilician pirates, who had for many years rendered all mercantile ventures unsafe, and it had well-nigh suppressed the predatory bands that infested the land routes, so that the commerce

and manufactures of the place had very largely increased, and with these its wealth and population. We need scarcely be surprised, therefore, to find the Ephesians erecting statues and votive tablets to the Roman emperors, even the most unworthy, and employing language which to us appears strangely at variance with their actual character. These emperors were to them the personification of a power that maintained their privileges and gave free scope to their industry, and under whose dominion they were peaceful and prosperous. Such conduct would be as natural in their case, as it would have been that the citizens of Rouen should erect a monument to Napoleon III.; and even more so, perhaps, than that those of Dublin should erect one to George the Fourth. And the Ephesians, almost all of whose traditions showed them as having had only a succession of masters, would be naturally disposed to fall in with the current mode of testifying respect to the head of the Government for the time being, if only they throve under his rule.

Such a city would offer analogous facilities to those which Barnabas had originally found at Antioch, and which Paul himself had found afterwards at Corinth. There was an unfixed population, having no other relation to the place but such as arose from the mere fact of their residence, numerous slaves, and a large degraded class; and there was a familiarity with other modes of thought, and an acquaintance with the philosophies and religions of the East, that might predispose many to listen to the preaching of a new faith. And it formed a centre from which agencies might radiate for the purpose of carrying the Gospel to the neighbouring cities and districts. Here, accordingly, Paul established his head-quarters; and from the length of his residence, and from later indications, we may infer that his labours were widely successful. Apparently, he not only founded a church in Ephesus itself, but personally or by his agents established churches also in Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Philadelphia, Colosse and Laodicea,<sup>1</sup> and probably in other places.

<sup>1</sup> Rev. ii. 9, 14, 20, iii. 9; Coloss.

But we learn from his letters, what we might have inferred, independently, from a consideration of his position, that his proceedings provoked great hostility; and as he is silent as to the quarter from which this hostility proceeded, we may probably refer it rather to parties within the Church, than either to the Jewish or heathen population of the place. We see in his letters to the Thessalonians that he had no scruple in denouncing the Jews when the opposition to himself came from that quarter, and that he attributed the sufferings of his converts in Thessalonica to the action of their own countrymen; so that we should expect one or the other to be mentioned here if the opposition he encountered arose from either. It may be true, it is indeed probable, that there were occasional collisions with both of these parties; for both would be aggrieved by his proceedings. But it is probable that his chief difficulties were created by the persistent opposition of the agents, or self-styled agents, of the Apostles, who would inevitably oppose his teaching here, as they were endeavouring to correct it in other places.

We can understand, however, that in Ephesus he might be able in the first instance, and probably for some time, to maintain himself against their attacks; for he preached to men who knew nothing of God, or of Jesus, or of the Law, or of the Church, but from him, and who would consequently be ready to accept as true whatever he might teach upon any of these subjects. He preached Jehovah as the one true God, and Jesus as His Son, proved to be so by his resurrection from the dead; and especially he proclaimed his speedy return in the clouds to establish his kingdom upon earth; and he invited his hearers to secure an entrance into that kingdom by repentance and the profession of a belief in Jesus, and by being baptized into his name for the remission of their sins. And no doubt he found many willing listeners. His rare faculty of persuasion, which is traceable throughout all his letters, excepting when for the moment it is overborne by his ungovernable self-assertion, would here stand him in good stead; the pictures he would



draw of the happiness that awaited those who were admitted into the kingdom, and of the misery consequent upon exclusion; the elevated moral standard that he placed before his audience; the spirit of mutual forbearance and love that he inculcated among the brotherhood; the speedy reversal of all existing social and political relations that he predicted, by reason of which the saints, then for the most part poor, servile, and oppressed, or at any rate discontented, should themselves be the judges of the world: his exposure of the absurdities of idol worship, and his fierce denunciations of every form of vice, would attract hundreds, and there would be no difficulty in forming a numerous church from those who thronged for admission. So soon, however, as a church was formed, questions could not fail to be raised. Paul's authority to baptize had been originally conferred either by the gift of the Spirit, by the laying on of hands by Ananias,<sup>1</sup> or on some subsequent occasion, most probably by the laying on of hands by the prophets and teachers of Antioch;<sup>2</sup> certainly by his having been received into the church and invested with office there. Nor had he even in theory separated himself from the body; for the very title he assumed was an implicit claim to be still a member, and to possess the authority connected with this, its highest office. But then this position provoked inquiries, the answers to which could not be altogether favourable to his claims, and afforded to the party of the Apostles, or of James, or of the extreme section of the church at Jerusalem, whichever may be assumed, a ground from which to assail his authority. If the churches he had founded were really members of the great society, they could not claim to be altogether independent of the rules which that society had imposed, nor refuse to recognize officers whom it might depute to inquire into their organization and discipline. Or if they did, such conduct would furnish arguments by which to appeal to individual members, and so draw them away to the old primitive Church, of which all separate churches were off-

<sup>1</sup> Acts ix. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xiii. 3.

shoots. And the position further involved the inconsistency that Paul claimed at the same time independence and union. While he asserted the one on the ground of the special revelation to himself, he could not forego the other without perilling his connection with the churches he had founded while an accredited agent of the society; for he could not expect that they, at his call, would separate themselves from the general Christian body. Nor, probably, dared he have taken such a step. But it is obvious he could not hope permanently to maintain these incompatible privileges. In so far as he put forward his individual claims, he must forfeit whatever advantages he expected to gain by reason of his assumed office; and, conversely, the assumption of that office, by defining his position in the society, conferred upon the other Apostles and the elders of the mother church a right to inspect and regulate his procedure. For the Apostles had not each, nor had any one of them, an independent sphere of doctrine and of action sacred from the intrusion of all the rest. They were a college, acting together for definite objects by authorized means, and teaching doctrines common to all as the basis of the faith and practice of the Church. Nor could any one of them dream of such independence; for it would shake the very foundation of the Church, which was built upon their concurrent testimony, not only as to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, but also as to his teaching.

It will be said that this picture of the position of Paul is conjectural; and no doubt it is so, in common with all histories which attempt to deal with his life at this period; for we have no direct information on the subject from any source whatever, and therefore can only conjecture. But it differs from other conjectures in this, that it is founded upon inferences drawn from Paul's own letters, and from the silence of the Acts on points upon which it had previously been explicit, coupled with what we learn as to the organization of the Church; while orthodox conjectures are based upon little more than *à-priori* assumptions as to what is likely to have been the case from their standpoint,

and upon arbitrary interpretations of the language of Paul. Paul *had* claimed to be an Apostle, and nevertheless to be independent of those who were Apostles before him; he *had* resisted the authority of James, as representing the church at Jerusalem, and nevertheless claimed a connection with that church, and recognized its members as saints; and the churches he had founded, in two instances at least, had been visited by persons who must have assumed to speak in the name of the Apostles. And it must be remembered that there is not a word in the Acts to assert or imply any friendship or co-operation between him and the other Apostles after the moment when the brethren at Jerusalem sent him away to Tarsus to secure his safety and their own peace.<sup>1</sup> It is, indeed, said or suggested that the Acts draws a picture of unbroken harmony in the Church during the whole career of Paul; but in truth it does nothing of the sort. It is silent, indeed, as to any disputes between him and the other Apostles, or between him and the brethren, but only because it presents an entire blank in reference to his relation to them. The result is altogether negative; but orthodox commentators have supposed that they may fill up the vacant space by edifying descriptions of unity and brotherly love; or, more frequently, of inspired dictation on the part of Paul, and implicit acquiescence on the part of Peter and others. But for this there is absolutely no authority in one word that Paul has written. And the Acts, though silent on the subject of any divisions in the Church during his last journey, as it is with regard to the dispute at Antioch, excepting the one vague notice to which we have referred when he separated the disciples at Ephesus, does allow us to see the profound dissatisfaction which his conduct had occasioned among the brethren, by the account which it gives of his reception by James. If Paul, in his letters written during this interval, had uttered one word to

<sup>1</sup> The account of the Council at Jerusalem, Acts xv., though it does not negative Paul's statement as to his recognition by his three leading Apostles, certainly does not imply anything of the kind. Paul is there made to fill throughout an inferior position.

show that he was supported or encouraged by the Apostles, or to disconnect them with the measures he denounces, or to claim support from any party within the Church; or if the Acts had even implied a reconciliation between him and Peter, or contained anything to show that the Apostles were unable to restrain the hostility he provoked, or held themselves aloof from it,—there would be some excuse for the current view; but, as it is, the only conjecture warranted by the evidence is such as we have formed.

We infer, then, that the period of Paul's residence at Ephesus was one of unceasing conflict, not only in that city, but over the whole of the ground that had been covered by his former missions, and that his principal opponents were leading men within the Church, acting with the sanction of the Apostles, and very probably, in some instances, Apostles themselves. We know, however, nothing of the matter excepting from himself; but we can see that the struggle on his part was maintained partly by his personal exertions, partly by letters, and partly by the agency of friends who still adhered to him; three of whom, Sosthenes, Timothy, and Titus, are mentioned by himself, and a fourth, Erastus, is mentioned in the Acts. But as, even in his fiercest invective, he is silent as to the names of the men by whom he was opposed, we can only guess at these. We see that Timothy first, and afterwards Titus, were despatched to Corinth, and from his first letter to the Corinthians we should suppose that some one also had been sent to the churches in Galatia;<sup>1</sup> for though his instructions with regard to the collection were probably contained in a letter, it would be natural that this should be conveyed or followed by some one authorized to speak in his name, whose oral teaching might supplement and enforce his lessons. And it would be almost a matter of course that messengers should also be sent to the churches in Macedonia bearing letters appropriate to their circumstances. We see that a letter had been written to the brethren at Corinth previously to the first

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 1.

that has been preserved to us; and probably no messenger was ever despatched without some brief written communication. But, in spite of all these efforts, we can understand that his position would gradually become less tenable. The challenge he had made to the Apostles and their party had been accepted, not only in Ephesus, but in Galatia and Corinth, and doubtless elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> And it was scarcely possible for him, single-handed, to make head against his opponents in so many different quarters. Even in Ephesus, where it might have been supposed that his personal efforts would enable him to maintain an equal fight, we see from his first letter to the Corinthians that the opposition against him, from whatever quarter, had become so embittered and violent as apparently to threaten his life; and, from his second, that ultimately it drove him from the city. And we may suppose it would not be less active or less successful in other places.

It may, however, be possible that the measures adopted by the Apostles had not, except in Ephesus itself, perhaps not even there, any direct reference to Paul, but were merely a part of the habitual agencies employed for the spread of the Gospel and for the regulation of the churches, and only became hostile to him by reason of his exclusive pretensions. If he and Barnabas had proposed to pay a second visit to the churches they had founded for the purpose of inspection, and if Barnabas and Mark had proceeded to Cyprus for this purpose, and Silas with himself had gone over the rest of the field, it would be only in accordance with the precedent thus set that some persons should visit the churches founded by the two latter in their capacity of delegates from the church at Antioch, and should revisit those founded by Barnabas and Paul on their first journey. And especially would this be necessary in those places in which the members of the churches were principally Gentiles, as presumably in Galatia, and certainly in Corinth and Thessalonica. It was not enough

<sup>1</sup> The "fightings without" in Macedonia (2 Cor. vii. 5) may be referred to the same agency.



to sow the seed or even to water it—it required constant care and supervision ; or, to change the figure, if Paul had laid the foundation of a belief in Christ, it was necessary to erect upon this the structure of a holy and blameless life, and wise master-builders were needed for this purpose. Paul sometimes seems to resent this action as an unauthorized intrusion into his special field of labour, and even as a violation of an implied compact with him ; but a moment's reflection would show the utter unreasonableness of such pretensions, and the impossibility of their being recognized by the Apostles. At the time of his last departure from Antioch, more than two years had passed since he had left the churches in Macedonia, and probably it was fully three years after that before he again visited them ; and though he might have written letters to them in the interval, these could but ill supply the want of personal inspection and control. And in the church of Corinth, which from its position was the most important of all, we see from his first letter that it had lapsed into a state of partial disorganization, exhibiting grievous irregularities of conduct, and great laxity of discipline and morals. If news of these disorders reached Paul at Ephesus, they would equally reach the churches of Jerusalem and Antioch ; and the Apostles must either resign themselves to see the name of Christ profaned and the credit of the society lowered by this conduct, or must take steps for the suppression of the obnoxious practices. The former course was, under the circumstances, impossible, and they would consequently at once address themselves to the latter.

We know nothing directly upon the subject of the mission to Corinth ; but, considering the great importance of that city as the capital of the province of Achaia, and one of the chief centres of commerce, so that not only would the example of its church be largely influential, but it would form a centre from which wider operations might emanate ; the occasion was one that might well be deemed worthy of the intervention of a leading Apostle. It is, therefore, by no means impossible that the claim

of Corinth to have had Peter for one of the founders of its church<sup>1</sup> was substantially true, and that he was the agent employed for the purpose. From the orthodox standpoint, there can, of course, be no difficulty in admitting this; for the picture drawn by Paul of the state of the Church shows the imperative need of some authoritative interposition; and the circumstance that, three or four years previously, Peter had been regarded as the especial Apostle of the circumcision, can afford no ground for supposing that he was unsuited to regulate the affairs of a Gentile church. That he had visited Corinth, is even implied by the language of the Epistle in describing the party watch-words in use there: "I of Paul; I of Apollos; I of Cephas," &c. Paul and Apollos had personally taught there, and the use of their names is therefore intelligible; but, on the ordinary view, what meaning is there in the use of that of Cephas? If, indeed, we suppose that, some time after the departure of Apollos, Peter had arrived at Corinth, the employment of his name becomes significant and full of purpose, for in that case he could not have failed to gather a party round him; but otherwise, why should his name be used, and not, for instance, that of James? If, as is assumed, there was a substantial identity between their views, then it would be only natural that Peter, like Apollos, should water what Paul had planted; and if not—if, as all the evidence indicates, he regarded Paul as schismatic—then, as he could not but attribute these irregularities to the laxity of his doctrine and practice, there would be all the more reason for his intervention.

But it may be said that any such visit of Peter is implicitly negatived by Paul's silence on the subject, and by his omission to refer to him on the occasions when he does refer to Apollos, and the introduction of his name might be expected. But there could be no more need to refer to it expressly, than there was to the corresponding visit of Apollos; for both would be within the personal knowledge of every one whom he ad-

<sup>1</sup> Dion. of Corinth, cited by Eusebius, H. E., B. ii. c. 25.

dressed, and it would have been impossible, under the circumstances, that he should have described Peter as watering that which he had planted, or introduce his name as one of those between whom and himself there was no question of rivalry or precedence.<sup>1</sup> But he does refer to him upon one occasion<sup>2</sup> in a phrase which seems to imply that he belonged to the Corinthians in the same sense as himself and Apollos; and as they did so by virtue of their personal teaching, so also it would seem that Peter must have done. And this view is to some extent corroborated, not only by the tradition to which we have referred, but by the first Epistle of Clement, who, in referring to the subject, speaks of the Corinthians as having formed inclinations to one person over another, which he excuses on the ground that their preferences were directed towards Apostles, and a man whom Apostles had sanctioned; implying, apparently, an attachment to persons, and not to doctrines.<sup>3</sup> These may be slight evidences, but they are independent, and they point in the same direction, and there is nothing but dogmatic prepossessions to set against them. The question, however, is one of secondary interest. If Peter were not at Corinth, his representatives were, claiming to be armed with his authority and to speak in his name; and there is no hint in any writing of Paul, or elsewhere, that they were ever disavowed by him.

As the new teachers do not appear to have attempted to enforce conformity to the Jewish Law, we are left to conjecture in what respect their doctrines differed from those taught by Paul himself.<sup>4</sup> We can have no doubt that one of their principal objects was to establish the discipline of the Church, in conformity with the decrees of the Council, and to induce the members to recognize the authority of the Apostles. Such a mission could not fail to excite much angry feeling; for

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 6, iv. 6.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Clement, 1st Epist. c. xlvii.

<sup>4</sup> If we could get behind the scenes, we should doubtless find many allusions to these differences which now escape us. Probably the "milk" with which Paul had fed them, as contrasted with the "meat" he withheld, is one such.

those who had been left in charge of the church by Paul would be jealous of any interference with their own authority, and would resist the attempt to enforce regulations conflicting with practices that he had sanctioned. But it would be only natural that the prestige of the Apostolate, [and the fact that Peter, whose special authority was invoked, even if he were not the head of the mission, had been a chosen companion and friend of Jesus, would speedily win over the greater part of the Church; though not perhaps without aggravating the opposition of those who remained faithful to their first leader. It must be remembered that neither Paul nor his adherents could seriously contest the pretensions of the Apostles. His own claim to be heard, indeed, implied at least the equal right of every one of the Twelve, and might easily be so construed as to admit their superiority. If Paul were an Apostle because he had seen Jesus on the road to Damascus, much more, might it be argued, were those who had not only seen him after his resurrection, but had been his trusted and familiar companions during the whole of his public ministry. And while the title of Paul rested upon his own unsupported assertion, that of the Twelve was public and notorious; coeval with the first formation of the Church, which was really founded upon their testimony.

But while we may believe that the first effect of the interference of the Apostles would be to bring over the majority of the brethren to their side, this could not be done without vehement protest; and, by aggravating party spirit, it would tend still more to relax the bonds of discipline. Those who were of the party of Cephas, and perhaps of Christ, would submit to rules imposed in the name of the Apostles and church of Jerusalem; but those who adhered to Paul or to Apollos, who obviously had much in common, and who at least agreed in setting up the authority of persons who were independent of the Twelve, would rather be disposed to vindicate their freedom from the formal observances now for the first time introduced, by exaggerating their compliance in matters indifferent. Such conduct, however,

would be felt to be dangerous by the more prudent members of these parties, and it would greatly scandalize their opponents, who would make it the basis of fresh accusations against the leaders whose authority was invoked. Under such circumstances, it was natural that an appeal should be made to Paul by his followers, and this appeal furnished him with an occasion for writing full instruction upon all the topics suggested by his own position and by the circumstances of the church. We gather from his letter that he had already written to them, though we are ignorant of the cause and nature of the communication. It has also been suggested that he had paid them a brief visit during the earlier part of his stay in Ephesus; but this appears improbable. The silence of the Acts is not, indeed, conclusive—not, under the circumstances, perhaps, of any great weight; but if there had been such a visit, we might expect some more definite allusions to the subject. The apparent references are more naturally explained by understanding them to refer to an unaccomplished purpose, rather than to one actually carried out; and there are passages which appear to exclude it; such, for instance, as that in iv. 18, 19; since, if Paul had really revisited Corinth, there could be no ground for assuming that he would not do so again. His language here implies that his prolonged absence, while his adversaries were occupying the field, had induced some to describe him as afraid to encounter them. And his time was apparently too fully occupied at Ephesus to allow of such a voyage.

One main object of the letter appears to have been to recall the Corinthian church to their allegiance to Paul himself; though this, in form at least, is secondary to the higher object of confirming the faith and regulating the conduct of the brethren. Still it is easy to trace an under-current of self-assertion, and of a claim to peculiar authority throughout; and in one passage<sup>1</sup> he expressly claims their adhesion to himself alone, on the ground that he had been the instrument of their conversion. Nothing could be better adapted to the attainment of this object

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 15, 16; comp. also xi. 1, 2.



than such a letter. After the lapse of so many centuries, with our modern habits of thought, and the merely speculative interest that we take in many of the questions, it is scarcely possible to read it without the impression that Paul was right throughout; and that a man who could so conceive of Christian love, and Christian virtue, and Christian hope, and who in the midst of exciting controversies could rise above them to these loftier regions of thought and feeling, was worthy of exclusive obedience and devotion. The Apostles and the church of Jerusalem retire into the shade; the Law is put on one side; even the sayings of Jesus are not referred to in connection with any of the greater questions: there is nothing but the individual reason and the individual conscience face to face with the problems that are seeking solution. Paul, indeed, reasons, advises, and commands, but always with an express or tacit submission to the judgment of those whom he addresses. He vindicates his own authority, but he appears to be chiefly concerned that his principles should triumph; and to claim this authority less for his own sake than because in the actual circumstances of the church it is the only ground upon which those principles could hope to be received. Some of his regulations may appear to us to be trivial;<sup>1</sup> some of his reasonings inconclusive; his applications of sacred history fanciful;<sup>2</sup> his view of the motives and objects of marriage low, and unworthy; but these things, even with us, scarcely detract from the general impression, and they would be accepted by his readers with implicit reverence. We can well understand, therefore, that the letter might cause a powerful reaction in his favour, and recall, perhaps, even the majority of the church to their old feelings of love and obedience to himself.

Nevertheless, in comparing this letter with that to the Galatians, we appear to perceive a marked alteration of tone. There is no longer the same unhesitating confidence in himself and his position. He is called to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, but the proof of his Apostleship is not of

<sup>1</sup> E. g. xi. 5 ff.

<sup>2</sup> E. g. x. 1—5.

universal force ; it is shown by the effects of his preaching, and is, therefore, only valid to those whom he has evangelized :<sup>1</sup> the Church in general may refuse to allow the proof. He is the least of the Apostles—not worthy, indeed, to be called an Apostle, because he persecuted the Church of God—though by the help and favour of God he has been made what he is, and has been enabled to labour more abundantly than all. He no longer denounces circumcision, but treats it as a matter purely indifferent. It is not, “Behold, I, Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing ;” but, “Is any man called, being circumcised, let him not become uncircumcised ; is any man called in uncircumcision, let him not become circumcised.” That which avails to the believer is not “faith working by love,” but “keeping the commandments of God.” And with regard to the question of eating meats offered to idols, there is clearly an abandonment of his original position, contrasting strongly with its resolute maintenance on a kindred topic, that of the observance of days and times, in his letter to the Galatians. And many similar instances may be detected.

With reference to the last point, orthodox commentators have apparently forgotten that the question of eating meat offered to idols was a matter affecting, to a certain extent, the daily life of converts in heathen cities ; and have written as though the letter from the Corinthians to Paul himself had been the first occasion calling for his decision upon the subject. But, obviously, this could not have been the case ; for during the many months spent in Corinth, abundant opportunities must have been afforded for the purpose. And yet not only is there no reference to any previous teaching, but it is obvious that those who had written to Paul, asking his advice, had assumed his approval of their conduct on the ground of their knowing the nothingness of idols, and, therefore, the impossibility that offering meat in sacrifice to them could change its character. Nor does Paul deny the force of this argument, or hint that it

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 1, 2.

conflicted with what he had taught. Rather, he declares his concurrence, and leaves it to be assumed that it was derived from himself; but he advises forbearance in the use of this, their admitted liberty, on the ground that there are weaker brethren who by reason of their lack of knowledge would be scandalized by the spectacle, or, worse, be led to imitate conduct which, though lawful in itself, appeared unlawful to them, and would consequently be sinful on their part. And then the mention of the Lord's Supper suggests a new ground of objection, founded, not upon the nature of things, but upon the belief and intention of the idol worshippers, and which, therefore, those who had knowledge would regard as essentially indifferent, since the beliefs of the heathen were surely entitled to less consideration than those of weak brethren. But it is obvious that throughout the argument Paul is embarrassed by the difficulty of reconciling the principles he had previously inculcated, with the practical abstinence which, in view of the prevailing laxity among his adherents in this respect, it was essential to enforce. Had it not been for this, his language would have been very different. Had he been able to refer to anything he had previously said—such, for instance, as his argument drawn from the inconsistency of their sharing the body and blood of Christ, and sharing the tables of devils—we can imagine the vehement indignation with which he would have rebuked their neglect of so solemn a warning. Instead of this, the latter view is introduced as an illustration, which had only just occurred to himself, and of which his converts had never previously heard. And in this respect his conduct has been implicitly condemned by the whole of Christendom, and probably with justice; though their admiration of the wisdom and charity of the rules he has laid down—his sympathy with the higher knowledge that raised its possessor above all questions of meats and drinks—his tenderness for the weakness of the majority, who were necessarily destitute of such knowledge, and the manner in which he apparently reconciles freedom in principle with abstinence in practice—have prevented

them from condemning him explicitly. But in deciding the question between himself and his opponents, we are bound as far as possible to do justice to both sides; and we must not allow our admiration for his ultimate decision, and for the reasons by which it is justified, to blind us to the circumstance that, until delegates from Jerusalem, who visited the church and were shocked by the practices they witnessed, had raised a protest against them, Paul had not said one word in their condemnation. We need scarcely inquire what would be thought in the present day of a missionary who, after having founded a church in a heathen city in which he had taught for nearly two years with unquestioned authority, could write to his followers in language which implied that, but for the offence given to others by their conduct, they might with a safe conscience sit at meat in an idol's temple—the meat, of course, having been previously offered in sacrifice to the idol—and yet more, that they could have written to him in terms which implied their belief that he would sanction their conduct, even in spite of such offence; as it is obvious that in this case the Corinthians had written. Certainly, every one would concur in recognizing the necessity that steps should be taken to make it understood that such practices could be no longer tolerated. It may even be doubted whether any services or sufferings in the cause, or any ability or eloquence in defending the essentials of Christianity, would purchase forgiveness or recognition for the individual who had sanctioned them. And Paul's present advice is at least an implicit condemnation of his former silence; since even if there had not originally been any weaker brethren to be wounded or tempted, so that abstinence was not demanded by Christian charity, the objection to partake of "the tables of devils" existed from the first. Not, perhaps, that we are to suppose he ever gave explicit sanction to such a step as eating idol meats in a heathen temple, but that this was a natural consequence of his principles, against which he had never warned his converts.

The regulations with regard to marriage are obviously given

under a profound sense of the imminence of the final consummation; though it may be suspected that they represent the deliberate convictions of the Apostle on the subject. Many attempts have been made to bring them into harmony with modern Protestant ideas and practice, but with very indifferent success; for after every allowance is made for the state of society to which his counsels apply, and for the mistake under which he labours as to the time of the second coming of Christ, it is still the fact that Paul represents marriage as a state to be deprecated in itself, and only to be tolerated in view of the irregularities that would be caused by its prohibition. He does not know, or he keeps out of sight, the higher motives and consequences of the conjugal union; he ignores altogether the "relations dear, and all the charities of father, son, and brother;" and fixes attention solely upon that one condition which belongs to our purely animal nature. There is no one, probably, who knows the purifying and elevating effects of virtuous love, and the humanizing influences of the family, but would repel the suggestion that it is good for a man not to touch a woman; and if a few exceptional individuals find that the abnegation of human love leaves room for a higher development of love to God, the vast majority of believers feel that they love God more just because of the conjugal and parental love which marriage permits and consecrates. The advice which Paul gives is that of a celibate who, it may be, has known and has had to strive against unlawful desire, but who knows nothing of true love.

It has been sometimes argued that Paul, even if he entertained a mistaken belief with regard to the near end of the world, was, nevertheless, right in the advice which he gave to his converts; since death, which is at all times imminent, is the end of the world to the individual. But the true lesson to be learned from the uncertainty of life is very different from that which Paul inculcates. No doubt we are to refrain from an over-eager pursuit of objects which are in their nature transitory; and from an undue attachment to objects which may be taken from us, or



from which we may be taken, at any moment. But this is only a part, and practically the least important part, of the lesson. Because we cannot tell how soon or how late our own lives, or the lives of those dependent upon us, may terminate, we are bound to the best of our ability to provide for their prolongation to the extreme limit. We recognize the possibility or the probability that they will be short, but we must act as though they will be long. For those who have wives and children, to act as though they had none; for those who buy, to act as though they possessed not; for all, indeed, to act as though human joys, and interests, and duties, were inevitably bounded to the entire race by a few weeks, or days, or months, and were, therefore, undeserving of serious thought, would not only be fatal to the progress and welfare of society—for that, perhaps, from the Christian standpoint is a small matter, scarcely worth consideration—but would be fatal also to the well-being of those who are dependent upon us, and for whose fate we are responsible. What is to become of the wife, and conversely of the husband—for the apostolical injunction applies to both equally—if each were acting as though the other was non-existent; and what of their children, if any had been born to them before their conversion? It may be true that natural instincts are too powerful to allow such advice to have any appreciable effect in the majority of cases, and that, therefore, it has failed to produce all the consequences that might have been anticipated. But it has tended to foster the idea that there is an essential opposition between Christian and secular virtue; and that man cannot rightly perform his duty to God unless he repudiates all obligations of duty towards his fellows; and these have been the fertile source of evil in the world.

The section on the observance of the Lord's Supper is full of interest, but not free from difficulties. The account of the institution of the sacrament is in substantial accord with that given in the Gospels; and at first sight we should be disposed to regard it as a mere exhortation to the more orderly celebration

of a rite, with regard to whose origin and meaning there was and could be no question. But a careful consideration of the language employed, and of the occasion of the letter, taken in connection with the history of the Church, suggests that the real position of affairs may have been very different from what we should at first imagine, and that the real object of the Apostle may be different also. If the description of the last Supper, as related by Paul, had been the common property of the Church, and the meaning and manner of celebration of the ceremony recognized and pursued from the very first days of the infant community, what object could there be in his claim to a special revelation for the purpose of acquainting him with facts which, on this hypothesis, every one knew, and which he must have been taught as soon as he was admitted to full membership? And the emphatic "I"<sup>1</sup> appears intended to emphasize, not a contrast between his teaching and the practices of his converts, but a contrast between his teaching and that of some other persons. It may, therefore, imply a difference between their account of the transaction and his own, corresponding to that between the conduct which he had prescribed and that which had grown up in his absence. This difference, it will be observed, corresponds with the difference between Paul's view of the rite and that which must have prevailed among the first disciples, who, we are told, "daily breaking bread from house to house (or rather in their own houses), did eat their meat in gladness and singleness of heart;"<sup>2</sup> showing that the breaking of bread formed a part of the ordinary meals which they shared in common. If so, however, the practice to which Paul objects would in reality be a return to the primitive practice of the Church, and might have been introduced by the teachers from Jerusalem; though in such a church as that of Corinth it might prove the occasion of disorders, upon which he seizes in order to vindicate the rules he had laid down.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 23 : "For *I* have received of the Lord that which also *I* delivered unto you."

<sup>2</sup> Acts ii. 46.

It is certainly difficult to admit the idea that the accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper given in the Gospels do not represent the original tradition of the disciples, but have been modified in order to justify the practices which had grown up in Gentile churches, founded upon this Epistle and the mode of celebration introduced by Paul. Still there are many circumstances which point in that direction. There is nothing to show that the view of the ceremony taken by Paul ever prevailed in the church of Jerusalem or among the Jewish brethren. The passage from the Acts, quoted above, implies, as we have seen, that the breaking of bread was a part of the ordinary meals of the disciples; and as they are described as living in common at the time, this would be of every meal. But such a practice was inconsistent with the view that Paul enforced. If the cup which was blessed was to the communicant a participation of the blood of Christ, and the bread which was broken a participation in his flesh,<sup>1</sup> then it was a profanation to make these a mere adjunct of an ordinary meal, or, worse, a part of the meal itself. But if the breaking of bread symbolized a memory and a hope—the recollection of the last meal which Jesus had shared with his disciples, and the expectation of the time when he would drink new wine with them in the kingdom of his Father—then it was natural that it should enter into every repast which they shared together. Either, therefore, the description in the Acts must be inaccurate, or the view taken by Paul of the nature and object of the celebration must have differed from that which prevailed in the primitive Church.

In this case, having regard to the legendary character of this portion of the Acts, the first impression would be unfavourable to its accuracy; especially as Paul is here in accord with all the Synoptical Gospels. But then, looking at his position at the time, opposed to the Apostles—or, if this should be denied, opposed by persons who professed to speak in the name of the Apostles—claiming to have received a special revelation upon

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. x. 16.

this very subject from Jesus himself, and asserting the originality of the doctrines he taught, we have to ask ourselves how it happened that his account coincided so exactly with that of the Apostles themselves, and that the arrival of their emissaries, or of those who claimed to be such, should have led to the introduction of practices apparently inconsistent with this account, and coinciding with those related in the Acts. Assuming that Paul, for the sake of asserting his individual authority, had preferred to rest his statement upon a separate revelation to himself, instead of appealing to the testimony of those who had been present and had heard the very words which Jesus uttered, he would lay himself open to the retort that this pretended revelation was quite unnecessary; for any brother who had shared the feast would have been able to tell him substantially the same story. And it is attributing to him a morbid vanity and self-assertion to suppose that he voluntarily abandoned the support which his teaching might receive from the corroborative witness of the Apostles, rather than admit that their report of what they had heard could have any weight; as, if his account coincided with the traditions of the Church, founded as these were upon their statements, he must have done. The natural inference is, that Paul claims a special revelation only when it is necessary to justify a doctrine peculiar to himself, and, therefore, that his doctrine with regard to the institution and meaning of the Lord's Supper was thus peculiar. And this is partly confirmed by what we are told of the Ebionites, who rejected his authority, founding themselves exclusively upon the Twelve; and who had a Gospel which they claimed to be, and which very probably was, the original Gospel written in Hebrew; but who either did not consecrate the cup, or employed water instead of wine, or wine and water. This practice, indeed, is assumed to be a departure from primitive usage; but their reverence for the Twelve makes it unlikely that they should have departed from a rule which they had established.

This is a question which can only be answered conjecturally.

There is no reference to the rite in the New Testament, outside of the Synoptical Gospels, but in this letter; nor in any of the Apostolical Fathers; excepting, indeed, in the more than doubtful Epistles of Ignatius to the Philadelphians and Smyrnæans. It is referred to by Justin Martyr; and his account coincides substantially with that which we now possess, and is professed to be taken from the Memorials of the Apostles. But he lived very nearly a century later, and after the division of the Jewish and Gentile brethren into the separate bodies of the Ebionites and the Orthodox, and, therefore, after the formation of two versions of the Gospel narrative; so that his citations afford no conclusive evidence of the original tradition. And there is too much uncertainty as to the time at which the Synoptical Gospels assumed their final shape, to enable us to place any reliance upon their concurrence in this particular.

There can be no question that the doctrine of the Church as to the meaning of the ceremony was for several centuries in a course of development. The difference is immense between the "breaking of bread" at the daily meals of the first disciples, and the "dreadful and mystic table" of Chrysostom;<sup>1</sup> and the participation in the body and blood of Christ, so that he who partook unworthily was guilty of that body and blood, taught by Paul, forms, as it were, the link which connects views so dissimilar, and enables us to understand how the one might pass into the other. Nor should it be forgotten that there were analogous practices and ideas in the heathen mysteries. There was a close resemblance between the mode of celebrating the Lord's Supper among the Christians of the second century, and the corresponding celebration among the worshippers of Mithras, which led to the latter being accused of plagiarism; a charge which we may be certain that they retorted upon their accusers. It may be suggested, and it is of course possible, that the development was the work of the Twelve—pondering over the words of Jesus, and gradually rising to a truer perception of their inner meaning;

<sup>1</sup> Cited in Taylor's *Ancient Christianity*, Vol. I. p. 261.



but against this we have to set the practices of the Ebionites, who were the successors of the Jewish churches, and the claim of Paul to a special revelation. Both of these suggest that the original purport of the rite was different from that which Paul taught, though they do not enable us to understand precisely in what the difference consisted.

The description of the virtue of Love, and the pre-eminence accorded to it in comparison with faith and hope, show how well Paul was able to conceive of the Christian ideal, and show also how far his own conduct fell short of the lessons he inculcated; and here, unfortunately, the great body of Christians have been satisfied to admire his precepts and to imitate his practice. Few parts of the New Testament have been more praised, and certainly very few have been less followed, than this; for all Christian communities have practically restricted the exercise of the virtue to those who hold the same belief with themselves, and have never been able to suffer long, or to be kind, or to refrain from speaking evil, with regard to those who hold or teach unsound doctrine. And, possibly, this might have been the sense that Paul himself would have given to his exhortation if he had been pressed upon the subject; or it might be that he would have declared this description to be the standard to which believers should endeavour to conform in their dealings with all men; and would have deplored that weakness of the flesh which kept him so far below the level of his own teaching. It is, however, possible that this eulogium is in part also a covert satire directed against the intruders into the church of Corinth; whom Paul and his friends might regard as displaying the opposite qualities to those which he here selects for commendation. No species of sarcasm is more telling than this to persons who are acquainted with its real object, whether those against whom it is directed, or those who listen to it approvingly, while none is more harmless in appearance to bystanders; and Paul was quite capable of employing a two-edged weapon of this sort; encouraging and stimulating his friends, and tacitly rebuking his

adversaries. With all our admiration, then, for the eloquence with which he enforces the virtue of love, and for the insight he displays into its essential features, it may be a question whether he has quite raised himself to the level of Jesus when he exhorted his hearers to show love to all men, in order that they might thus prove themselves to be the children of God, who made His sun to shine upon the evil and the good, and who sent His rain upon the just and the unjust.

The section on the resurrection of the dead brings before us, perhaps, more vividly than any other portion of the Epistle, the hope by which the converts were animated, and which formed, no doubt, the chief motive for joining the society;—that of seeing the almost immediate return of Christ to earth, and of themselves being admitted to his presence and sharing in his glory, after having been so “changed” as to fit them for their new state of existence.<sup>1</sup> This was the good news that Paul preached—that Christ, who had died for their sins, had been raised from the dead, and was shortly about to return; to be heralded by the last trumpet, at whose sound those of the Church who had “fallen asleep” should be raised, and those who remained alive should be changed into his own likeness, rising into the air to meet him, and ever after remaining the spectators and the sharers of the glories and bliss of his kingdom.

It appears that some among the brethren at Corinth denied or doubted the possibility of a bodily resurrection; urging that the body, when once resolved into its original elements, was in-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 52 ff. Some read in verse 52, “we shall all die, but we shall not all be changed,” instead of the reading of the authorized version, “we shall not all die, but we shall all be changed;” but there can be scarcely a doubt that the *textus receptus* followed in that version preserves the original reading, since otherwise there would be a palpable contradiction with the succeeding verse, which implies that Paul, and at least the majority of those whom he addressed, would not die. And while the apparent falsification of the assertion, by the death of Paul and all of his contemporaries, accounts for the change in the principal manuscripts, it is not easy to suppose a change in the other direction. No copyist would have ventured on an alteration which made the Apostle utter a notoriously false prediction.

capable of being re-organized. This objection is answered by Paul, partly by a reference to the fact that Christ had been raised from the dead, and that, therefore, a resurrection had been proved to be possible; partly by a consideration of the consequences that would flow from an opposite view; and partly by the analogy of the growth and germination of the seed after it is sown in the ground. But the tenor of his argument, no less than this illustration, implies that the corruptible bodies which had so long trammelled the spirit, would have no share in the resurrection. The physical (= material) would be changed for a spiritual (= aerial) body,<sup>1</sup> and would be left behind as a worn-out garment. Flesh and blood, the perishing earth-vesture, could not be admitted into a purely spiritual world; could not inherit the kingdom of God. It was not the mortal frame that had been committed to the grave, or consumed upon the funeral pyre, that was to be raised when the Son of Man should be manifested—that was the mere germ from which the new spiritual body was to spring, in a manner as mysterious as the growth of the plant from the seemingly dead seed. And this view enables us to understand Paul's conception of the resurrection of Jesus; for he could not suppose that he had taken to heaven those very elements which his brethren must perforce leave behind. True, in the case of Christ, the fleshly body had not been the instrument of sin; but it had been a source of weakness, needing constant supplies to restore the failing energies, and making him liable to weariness and sorrow. And these incidents were inseparably attached to matter. The animal organization (*σωμα ψυχικόν*) adapted to the present order of things, would be out of place in the spiritual kingdom which Jesus was to found; how much more, therefore, in the highest heaven, to which he had for the time been raised!

We need not examine this train of reasoning minutely; for the object of the Apostle was not to prove the doctrine of the resurrection, since his letter was addressed to persons who by

<sup>1</sup> Paul had, of course, no idea that the air was material.

being baptized into the name of Jesus had admitted it in his case, but to render it comprehensible, and therefore credible. Probably, neither he nor his readers had any conception of a disembodied spirit, in our modern sense of the phrase; but they could conceive of a spiritual, = aerial body,<sup>1</sup> which might in some mysterious way be developed out of the decayed or decaying animal frame, and which should be suited to the new æon in which the resuscitated believers were to exist. Undoubtedly, this solution would only furnish fresh questions to the sceptical; but these were not the class to whom Paul was addressing himself. Coming to the believers in Corinth with the weight of his authority, and set forth with the surpassing eloquence with which the theme inspired him, it would furnish an answer to all their doubts, as it has to the doubts and questionings of countless believers since.

There are, however, two noticeable points in the argument; the first implying that baptism was the condition of an entrance into the kingdom of God, and that the benefit of the ceremony could be obtained vicariously, at least in the case of those who had died previously to the preaching of the Gospel among them; and the second, that only the saints would be raised. The expression, "What shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all?" can bear no other sense than that none but the baptized could be admitted, and that baptism of itself conferred a title to admission.<sup>2</sup> If the dead did not rise, the ceremony would be of no avail; consequently, if the dead

<sup>1</sup> Our word spiritual is so far diverted from its original meaning as to conceal the nature of Paul's conception. The change is perhaps most strikingly shown in the celebrated passage from the fourth Gospel: "The wind bloweth where it listeth," &c. (John iii. 8). The authorized version altogether obscures the point of the phrase. "The breath (or air or wind) breatheth (*το πνευμα πνει*) where it listeth—and thou hearest the sound thereof, &c. So is every one that is born of the breath" (*εκ του πνευματος*). The breath was not the type of the Spirit, but the Spirit itself.

<sup>2</sup> Paul was no doubt thinking only of Gentiles. It is possible that if he had been pressed, he would have admitted that Jews who had after their manner been faithful to the Law, and who had died before the coming of Christ, would share in the resurrection.

did rise, those on whose behalf it was performed would reap the benefit, in the same way as though they had themselves been the recipients. And if this vicarious reception of the rite availed for those who had made no profession and exercised no faith, much more must the rite itself have been efficacious in the case of those who had believed and professed their belief, and had been actually buried with Christ in the ceremony. It seems to lower the Apostle's view of the Christian life, and even to contradict some of his fundamental conceptions, to suppose that he could have attributed such efficacy to a mere outward form; and especially it seems at variance with the somewhat disparaging reference to the administration of the rite in the phrases, "I thank God I baptized none of you save," &c.; and, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel;"<sup>1</sup> but we must remember that seeming inconsistencies of this nature are to be found even in the most systematic thinkers, and are to be looked for as a matter of course in so impulsive and unsystematic a writer as Paul. And as his letters are addressed exclusively to men who have been baptized, all of his reasonings must be taken as implying a tacit recognition of the essential importance of the ceremony. There is, consequently, no ground for rejecting the plain and obvious meaning of the passage; and there were abundant reasons why such a practice should spring up. Among the converts there must have been many who had recently lost a parent or a child, a husband or a wife, to whom the thought of the eternal separation consequent upon their own baptism would have been insupportable, and who would almost refuse heaven for themselves if it could not be shared with those whom they had loved and lost. Christianity had not as yet hardened into ecclesiasticism; making the individual so absorbed in securing his own escape from the infinite torments of hell, as to regard with indifference the fate of others, even of those whom he might have lured or driven to destruction, unless so far as it bore upon his own. These feelings demanded recognition and, as

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. i. 14, 17.



far as possible, satisfaction, and a substituted baptism was one means for effecting the purpose. The practice, however, soon died out in the Church; for it was opposed to the theory of baptism that subsequently prevailed; but its existence at this time illustrates the opinions and feelings subsisting in the churches which Paul had taught, and implicitly at least sanctioned by him. We may even conjecture that it was introduced by him, since we find it here in Corinth, in a church which he had formed; and it afterwards existed as a heresy among the followers of Marcion, who professed to found himself exclusively upon the teaching of Paul; and in some obscure churches in Galatia and Asia, where also he had first preached the Gospel,<sup>1</sup> and, apparently, in no other quarters.

And it would also seem that, in the view of the Apostle, the resurrection was to be confined to those who had been baptized, since his description is only applicable to them. The dead are to be raised "incorruptible." In the resurrection, the body "is sown in corruption, and raised in incorruption; sown in dishonour, and raised in glory; sown in weakness, and raised in power; sown a natural, and raised a spiritual body." Obviously, this language is intended to apply, and can apply only, to the resurrection of the believer. It is impossible that Paul could have used such terms to describe the raising of those who were resuscitated only to endure endless torments; and this is the only raising of which he speaks. We have no means of knowing in what manner he conceived of the fate of the unbaptized; it lay outside of his subject, and he nowhere refers to it explicitly. Possibly, he expected that they would remain in the grave, not being raised, and therefore continuing to sleep; for to them there had been no gift of the Spirit, and thus no germ from which a spiritual body could be developed. Possibly, he anticipated that they would be judged and punished; but in that case he must certainly have looked for their ultimate restoration; for Christ must reign until he had subdued all enemies, and

<sup>1</sup> Stanley: St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, in loc.

especially until he had destroyed death, the fruits of sin. And this could not be effected so long as the vast majority of the human race were hopelessly dead to Christ and to goodness in the eternal place of torment. As long as sin reigned, death, its correlative, must reign also; so that the destruction of death implied the previous destruction of sin; and not till then would the work of the Redeemer be completed. This enables us to understand the phrase: "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death;" for death, the consequence, could not be destroyed so long as sin, its cause, existed. Christ, therefore, must reign until both had been subdued; after which consummation he would yield up his dominion to God the Father, who would thenceforth be all in all—the pervading, animating, and governing principle of the universe. It would have been, in the mind of the Apostle, the worst blasphemy to suppose that God could be this in a place of sin and torture. The very postponement of His assumption of the full dominion that always of right belonged to Him, until death no longer had power, shows that to Paul such a thought was impossible. But whatever value may be attached to these considerations, it is certain that in the resurrection, which he here describes as to take place at the coming of Jesus, he only anticipated the raising of the saints.

The possession of "charisms"—supernatural gifts or graces in the primitive Church—has been dwelt upon with much unction by various writers; but the description given by Paul implies, probably, nothing more than that the converts were distinguished, as any equal number of persons would be now, by different qualities, which were utilized for the benefit of the Church; and that all these, in his view, were talents entrusted to them by the Father, and to be employed in His service. Some had the gift of eloquence, and were successful preachers, arousing the conscience and stimulating the feelings; some possessed a discriminating judgment, and could estimate the value of the opinions promulgated; some, in a state of ecstasy, uttered unintelligible sounds, which, under the name of "tongues," were regarded as

supernatural; some were able to attach a meaning to these sounds, which they explained to the meeting; some were able to effect unexpected cures; and some were careful and orderly—good managers, and so useful in conducting the business of the Church. But there was nothing in any one of these powers which has not been in a greater or less degree the property of the Church during almost the whole of its history; with the exception of the tongues, the only really purposeless endowment, which, therefore, soon lapsed into disuse; re-appearing, indeed, at times of peculiar excitement,<sup>1</sup> but discouraged and suppressed in proportion as the movement became organized and settled. How far they were really to be regarded as the gifts of God, may be judged from the description given of the manner in which they were exercised at the meetings of the Church. Here, there would be three or four brethren “filled with prophetic impulse,” and all uttering their prophecies together, without regard to the others; there, perhaps, half a dozen “constrained to pour forth their ecstatic feeling in the exercise of the gifts of tongues,” until, apparently, nearly the whole assembly were mastered by the same constraint; so that a stranger casually present and witnessing the exhibition might fancy he was beholding a meeting of madmen. And in these scenes it appears that the women, bareheaded, took an equally prominent part with the men! That such results should be produced by the contagious excitement generated by the concourse of numbers, gathered together after sunset, all prepared to witness and experience supernatural manifestations, is almost a matter of course; but we may venture to doubt whether the Holy Spirit (= God) would be the author of such confusion, and may prefer to believe that Paul was mistaken in the source of these displays, rather than that they were the effect of a Divine influence.

It would carry us away from our more immediate purpose to pursue our examination of the Epistle into other details. There

<sup>1</sup> As in the Cevennes; in the first preaching of Wesley and Whitfield; among the Irvingites; and at many modern revival meetings.

is only one additional point to be noted here. In spite of all the irregularities in conduct and errors of belief, even in the case of the incestuous person, and of those who deny the resurrection, Paul recognizes them as saints—members of the body of Christ, and entitled to the benefits of his death. He does not treat them as heretics, but as erring brethren. They were “washed,” and therefore sanctified and justified, and, apparently, secure of an entrance into the kingdom; and more, this sanctification extended to the unbelieving husband and wife, and to their children.<sup>1</sup> He, indeed, threatens to deliver over the chief offender to Satan, for the destruction of his flesh—or, perhaps, he does so deliver him—but only that by this means his spirit may be saved; and it appears clearly implied that so long as any one remained in the Church, he would not forfeit the privileges he had gained by admission. If he were excommunicated—and this power was necessarily vested in the Church, as in every society—he might then lose the benefits of membership, but until then he continued to enjoy them.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 14.

## CHAPTER IX.

### EPHESUS TO GREECE.

Paul driven from Ephesus—Hostility probably that of parties within the Church—Possibly headed by John—Grounds for the supposition—Hostility personal to Paul—His position at the time—Had only written letters to Thessalonians and Galatians till just before leaving Ephesus—Nature of his teaching—Contemplated journey to Jerusalem—Motives for the step—Gradual preponderance of party of Apostles—Wide labours of Paul at Ephesus—Ultimate defection of majority of churches founded by him—We only know his movements from his own statements in 2 Corinthians—Troubles in Macedonia—Anxiety as to effect of first letter to Corinthians relieved by arrival of Titus—Still hesitates—Second letter—Change in tone is produced, apparently, by fresh news from Corinth—Probably of arrival of deputation headed by Apostle—Letter to Romans—Probably circular Epistle intended for use of principal churches when he was about to leave the district permanently—Doubtful if Paul ventured to visit Corinth—If he did, unable to quell opposition—This shown by absence of deputies from city in his party—Compelled to leave Greece prematurely—Stands alone, resting entirely upon his own authority—Repulsion produced by his allowance of eating idol meats—Unsuitableness of his doctrines for general apprehension—Gentiles probably attracted by definite rules, and afraid of the freedom he offered—The view taken opposed on supernatural, but justified on historical grounds—Apostles could not have been neuter—If friendly to Paul, he would have recognized their aid—No such recognition.

AFTER the despatch of his letter to the church at Corinth, the opposition to Paul, which had already threatened his life, became, apparently, still more embittered and violent. From the Acts it would seem that it arose from the heathen population of the city—principally the makers of the silver shrines of Artemis—provoked by the falling off of their trade in consequence of the spread of the new doctrines; and it is quite possible that such a motive may have co-operated with other influences to excite hostile proceedings. But looking to his position at the time, and the measures directed against him, or against his doctrines and pretensions in Corinth and Galatia, it seems impos-



sible to doubt that the main opposition was raised by the party claiming to represent the Apostles. We have no information as to the time when the Apostle John settled at Ephesus;<sup>1</sup> but it is by no means improbable, rather, indeed, it is highly probable, that he was there at this time, the leader of the party. The silence of the Acts has here no weight whatever; for there is the same silence with regard to his presence at the Council, as well as with regard to the presence of Peter, and his dispute with Paul at Antioch. All that we can infer from it, therefore, is, that if John were in Ephesus at the same time with Paul, the relations of the two were unfriendly. And there were strong reasons why one of the three "pillar" Apostles should be selected for the post. The position of Ephesus rendered it as important in Asia Minor as Corinth was in Achaia, and it could neither be left unvisited nor entrusted to any inferior agency. For, apart from the question of the continuing obligation of the Law upon Jews, which to the Apostles, who were Jews themselves, and connected by the strictest ties with the church of Jerusalem, was of primary importance, the conflict, as they understood it, involved the future destiny of Christianity; since that depended upon maintaining unimpaired their authority as the depositaries of the teaching of Jesus, and preserving a marked distinction, and one easily recognized, between believers and the world. If men baptized into the name of Jesus might freely share in the entertainments of the heathen, where it was almost a matter of course that meat offered to idols would form part of the feast—and this at least Paul had expressly sanctioned—still more if, under the pretence of some higher knowledge, they might eat meat which they knew had been so offered in the very temple of the idol itself, what security could there be in the nature of things against their sharing, under the same pretence, in the licentious practices by which these feasts were often accompanied? And if Paul, on the ground of his unsupported asser-

<sup>1</sup> We shall subsequently examine the question as to his residence in that city, and give reasons for accepting the popular tradition in this respect.

tions that particular doctrines had been revealed to him, or upon his own estimate of the extent and value of his labours, could claim apostolical authority and dignity, what safeguard was there against a host of pretenders making similar assertions and urging similar claims? No society could be stable or united which tolerated such pretensions; so that, on the ground of discipline as well as of morality, it was incumbent upon them to interfere. And it would not be likely that they should send any but one of the highest and best qualified among them; for Paul was an opponent of exceptional energy and ability, demanding corresponding qualities in whoever should be selected to confront him; and these qualities, we may believe, were possessed by John.

On the supposition that he was the person selected, we are able to understand not merely the reference to him in the letter to the Galatians, and the part assigned to him in the earlier portion of the Acts, but also the references to his character in the third Gospel, which appears to have originated from the party of Paul. His forbidding one to cast out devils in the name of Jesus, because he did not follow the Twelve, and his proposal to call down fire from heaven upon the Samaritan city, would in that case correspond to his persistent denial of Paul's right to teach, and to the spirit in which he carried out his mission. And the reported rebuke of Jesus in each case would be a tacit, but well-understood, censure upon his conduct. And it is in some degree confirmatory of this view that in Ephesus, as well as in Antioch, we find indications of the existence of two rival churches, under separate bishops, one claiming to have been appointed by Paul and the other by John.<sup>1</sup> It is true that this authority is of little weight; and the fact, if it were so, might be explained by the suggestion that John had arrived there at a later period, and had refused to recognize the church founded by Paul; or that this church had refused to submit to his authority. But it can scarcely be supposed that in Paul's absence any

<sup>1</sup> *Apost. Const. B. vii. sect. 4.*

church would refuse to submit to the authority of one of the chief Apostles; for this would be to cut themselves off from communion with the general body of believers. If, therefore, there was any foundation for the tradition, it would be more probable that the two churches were founded contemporaneously.

In this matter, as in so many others, it is impossible to rise above conjecture, and it is, necessarily, difficult to obtain a hearing for a conjecture which conflicts so completely with the view as to the place of Paul in the Church, and the essential harmony between him and the Twelve, which it has pleased orthodox commentators to entertain. That view, however, is founded neither upon the Acts of the Apostles, nor upon the letters of Paul himself, nor upon those of James and Jude; and it is absolutely contradicted by the Apocalypse. It springs chiefly from the opinion, that men who were the subjects of the same divine inspiration and the agents in the same holy work, must have been at peace among themselves; though it is partially supported by the first Epistle of Peter, and by the silence of the Acts. But any one who will fairly attempt to realize the actual posture of affairs—particularly Paul's position at the time—must, we think, arrive at the same general conclusions that we have indicated, though he may still differ as to particular incidents. For at the time of his separating the disciples at Ephesus, none of the letters bearing his name that have survived to us had been written, excepting the two to the Thessalonians; and even when he despatched the first to the Corinthians, he had only written in addition that to the Galatians. The two first of these were probably little known, and the last could only tend to strengthen the feelings of hostility to himself. Let any one suppose that these three letters were all that we knew of Paul, and he will at once feel how different would have been the estimate formed of his character, and how little share he would have had in shaping the doctrine of the Church. And then let him remember that Paul was at this time publicly teaching that there was no offence in eating meats offered to idols, if only the

convert had not his attention directly called to the fact, or, it may be, chose to assume ignorance on the subject; and that not only did this doctrine shock the deepest convictions of the Jews, but the eating of these meats was inseparably connected in their mind, and was often also associated in fact, with licentious practices.<sup>1</sup> It would be nothing to them, therefore, that he denounced such practices, if he sanctioned conduct which, as they believed, necessarily led to them. And further, that Paul, in order to vindicate his right to teach these doctrines, claimed to be an Apostle, the superior of the Twelve, able on his own individual authority to abrogate rules which they had imposed, and to teach doctrines which they repudiated; and we imagine he must feel that it would be impossible to allow him to continue his teaching uncontradicted. It may help us partially to understand his position, if we imagine the case of a monk in the twelfth century, who taught the indifference of abstaining from meat on a Friday, and who, when confronted with the practice of the Church and the decrees of Councils, had conceded so far as to recommend that the meat should be eaten in such a manner as to avoid scandalizing weak brethren; but continued to assert its innocence, and justified the assertion on the ground of revelations to himself which made his authority superior to that of Council or Pope! And the case of Paul was really analogous to this, excepting that, happily, the Apostles had no external authority which enabled them to cut short the career of an obstinately erring brother, and that, therefore, the Church, as it rose above these controversies, was able to avail itself of the writings of both parties alike.

Before writing to the Corinthians, Paul had begun to meditate another journey to Jerusalem, and he was anxious, if he made it, to carry with him a large contribution to the treasury of that church. It had been, he tells us, a stipulation when his mission to the Gentiles was recognized, that he and Barnabas should

<sup>1</sup> It was supposed also to give power to demons over the bodies of those who partook of the food.—Clem. Hom. viii. 20.

bear in mind the wants of the disciples in Judæa, and he would be naturally anxious to show that no personal disagreements had induced them to neglect this obligation. No doubt he sympathized with their privations, which he had witnessed; and to bring liberal contributions from Gentiles whom he had introduced into the society, might form a strong inducement with those whose sufferings were thus alleviated to permit the continuance of labours which yielded such fruits. With this view he had already given instructions to the churches in Galatia,<sup>1</sup> presumably in a letter which has not been preserved, to make weekly contributions, according to their ability, and he now gives the same directions to the Corinthians. We see, however, that at this time his future movements are altogether undecided. He proposes to remain in Ephesus for a little while, in spite of his adversaries; but he would fain visit Corinth; though in the existing condition of the church he is unable to anticipate the reception that awaits him, and he hesitates. Still, when he does leave Ephesus he will visit Corinth by way of Macedonia; and if he feels it expedient to proceed himself to Jerusalem, he trusts that they will forward him on his journey. Under all circumstances, then, whatever may be his own movements, he is anxious that the contributions for the poor of that place should proceed.

It may appear strange at first sight that Paul should have contemplated a visit to Jerusalem, if the opposition he had encountered originated from that city, and especially if there had been such a conflict between him and the Twelve as we have suggested; for there, at least, he could not hope to meet them on equal terms, whatever he might do in Gentile towns. But it is possible that he had already begun to realize, what must have been apparent to any impartial bystander from the beginning, that the contest between himself and the leaders of the Church was too unequal to be long successfully maintained on his part. Where he was present, he might for a time be able

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 1.



to hold his ground, and even when absent his letters might create a temporary reaction in his favour; but in the end the authority of the Apostles must almost inevitably prevail; and the longer the contest endured, the more clearly would this result be brought out. The time had not yet arrived when he felt that nothing was left to him but to seek a definitive adjustment of the question at Jerusalem; the tone of his letter to the Corinthians shows that he had hopes of recalling that church to his side; and there had been, apparently, a transient gleam of success at Ephesus, which encouraged him to prolong his stay. But he must have anticipated such a contingency, and have felt the importance of being prepared for it, should it arrive. And contributions for the support of the brethren would probably be one of the most efficient preparations.

We have no means of ascertaining how long Paul remained at Ephesus after writing the first letter to Corinth, but we should suppose, from the Acts, that it could only have been for a short time. We are then told that, having determined to visit Macedonia and Achaia, and then to visit Jerusalem, with the purpose of ultimately proceeding to Rome, he sent Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia;<sup>1</sup> presumably to make the requisite arrangements for his reception; and almost certainly to superintend the collection which he had set on foot. We see that the former was expected to visit Corinth also for the same purpose,<sup>2</sup> and obviously in the hope that his presence and exhortations might strengthen and confirm the impression produced by the letter; and we may gather that he had been despatched on his journey before that letter was completed. And then the tumult in the theatre, provoked by the makers of the shrines of Artemis, is described as occurring almost contemporaneously with their departure; immediately after which Paul himself leaves. And we should gather from his own expressions in his second letter that his stay in Ephesus had been cut short. In the first, he writes of his position in that place in terms of confidence. It is true

<sup>1</sup> Acts xix. 21, 22.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 17, xvi. 10.

that, speaking after the manner of men, he has had to fight with wild beasts there, and there are still many who oppose themselves to him; but the field is large, and he is conscious of possessing the energy needed for its occupation. In the second, however, this tone is changed for one of despondency: troubles had come to him which he was unable to withstand; even his life was threatened, and he owed his deliverance to some providential interposition—God, who raises the dead, having delivered him from the dangers by which he was menaced.<sup>1</sup> It seems natural, at first sight, to connect these last expressions with the tumult in the theatre; but the language does not harmonize with such an interpretation, since there was no personal danger to Paul himself on that occasion. And as the writer of the Acts, though leaving it to be inferred that Paul did quit Ephesus on account of that tumult, is careful not to assert that such was the case, and is throughout silent as to the opposition to which Paul himself refers, it is only natural to assume that this latter opposition proceeded from some party within the Church.

As we have seen, in spite of all opposition, whether within or without the society, he had preached the Gospel and had established churches not only in Ephesus, but in most of the principal cities in the district. This could not have been done without great activity and incessant labour; and it shows how far he was from being absorbed in the controversies which his proceedings provoked. The questions in dispute formed, after all, but a very small portion of his teaching, and probably were of less importance to himself than to his adversaries. And whether his title to the office were recognized or not, he would still perform the work of an Apostle in preaching the good news of the kingdom of God, and in admitting converts to its privileges by baptism; and probably also in "ordaining" presbyters or bishops for the regulation of the churches, and evangelists to preach in places which he was unable to visit.

We gather, then, that all of the churches in this region

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 32, xvi. 9; 2 Cor. i. 8.

ultimately passed over to the side of his opponents, and they appear even to have forgotten their original connection with him; for in the traditions of the next century, as transmitted by Papias, his name is not once mentioned as associated with them. It is probable, indeed, that this defection had begun before he left the district, since the phrase, "the trouble which came to us in Asia," appears to suggest that the circumstances which compelled his departure were not confined to Ephesus;<sup>1</sup> and we see from the Revelations that in a few years from this time his party is apparently described as being everywhere the minority. But whatever might be the source or the extent of the hostility that drove him forth, it seems to have been almost wholly personal to himself; since, though he is forced to leave, the church remains; and in the message of the Spirit to the angel of the church of Ephesus, there is no reference to the endurance of persecution, but he is congratulated upon not being able to endure that which is evil, and upon having tried those who say they are Apostles and are not, and having found them liars. And Ephesus long continued to be the leading church of the district; though its early glories were associated, not with the name of Paul, but with that of John, who appears, indeed, as the head of a Christian church, but with the distinctive insignia of a Jewish high-priest.

Of Paul's proceedings at this time, and of the circumstances in which he was placed, we know scarcely anything; excepting from the brief incidental notices which his letters contain. In the Acts we are told only that he "departed to go to Macedonia; and when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece, and abode there three months." From his own account, we learn that from Ephesus he went to the Troad, where he found unexpected facilities for preaching the Gospel; but that he was so pressed by his anxie-

<sup>1</sup> It is true that, writing from Macedonia, he might use the word Asia, even though he had only Ephesus in his mind at the time; but the other is the more natural meaning.

ties, especially in connection with the church of Corinth, as to be unable to turn them to account. Accordingly he passed over into Macedonia, intending to proceed to Corinth, but hesitating to take this step until he should have ascertained the effect of his letter; so as to enable him to judge how far such a visit might be prudent. For it might well be that the causes, whatever they were, that had driven him from Ephesus might exist in equal force in Corinth. But in Macedonia he found no rest; "without were fightings, within were fears;" so that he could not derive any support or consolation in the midst of his anxieties from a peaceful communion with his former friends.<sup>1</sup> In the midst of his perplexities, he was joined by Titus, who brought an encouraging report of the state of the church of Corinth, and of their feelings on the reception of his letter; and this induced him to write again, in preparation for his intended visit. But it is clear that there were still many difficulties in the way: accusations against which he has to defend himself; explanations that it was needful to furnish; indicating a state of feeling in the church that would make an immediate interview a matter of very doubtful expediency. This is shown by the tone of the letter itself, and still more decisively by his own proceedings; for the reasons he assigns for his delay in visiting them show that he was not detained by any pressing duties in Macedonia, but solely by considerations arising out of the state of the church at Corinth. And we can perceive that there is a consciousness in his own mind of the seeming justice of some of the accusations made against him; for the vehemence of his asseverations and the motives he assigns for his conduct<sup>2</sup> are not the expressions of a man who feels that he has been

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 5. Or was it that he unconsciously exaggerated the difficulties of his position, under the strong impression of the relief produced by the arrival of Titus, and the news he brought? This may seem to be indicated by the tone in which he speaks of the churches in Macedonia, in referring to the collection. But there must have been dissensions in the churches, in which he was implicated, to have suggested this language.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. i. 15—24.

wronged by a baseless suspicion, which will be removed by an open statement of the circumstances, but rather of one who is conscious, indeed, of his own rectitude, but aware also that his behaviour has given a colour to the charge. And that the reason he assigns was not the sole, or even the actuating motive of his conduct, is shown by the circumstance that, when it was removed, instead of hastening to perform his promise of visiting them, he waits until he has further prepared the way by another letter.

The first portion of that letter certainly appears to show that the news brought by Titus was of a cheering character; evincing a disposition in the church to acknowledge his authority, and to correct the abuses that he had censured. Not that dissatisfaction had been entirely quelled; but that the memory of his original services, aided by the powerful appeals contained in the Epistle, and, probably, by the personal efforts of Timothy, and perhaps of Erastus, had brought back the former feelings of his converts to himself. He learns that they had not been alienated by the sharpness of his rebukes, but had recognized and submitted to his authority; or, from another point of view, that it had composed the strifes that were disfiguring the Church, by uniting the brethren in obedience to the principles that he had enforced. The prevailing tone of this part of the letter is that of congratulation and sympathy; but he cannot escape from the feelings engendered by the former opposition, or refrain from asserting his authority against his opponents, and contrasting his own truthfulness with their falsehood and error. And though this self-assertion is qualified by an express disclaimer of all personal merit, everything that he is and does being the result of the grace of God working in him, it may be a question whether this seeming humility<sup>1</sup> does not in effect veil claims to a higher position and more irresistible power than could of right belong to himself in his own individual character. To resist Paul, the

<sup>1</sup> It would be very misleading to judge of the claims of the Pope, or of the spirit in which they were asserted, by his title of "Servus Servorum."



eloquent writer, the persuasive teacher, the acute reasoner, abounding in knowledge and zeal, would be a small matter. If, however, it is understood that none of these gifts belong to him by nature, but that all are due to the Divine Spirit, of whom he is only the instrument, then to resist him is to resist God himself. And he does not abandon any one of his pretensions; on the contrary, he repeats and enforces them. He professes to renounce all claim to have dominion over their faith; he is merely a helper of their joy; but this is only so long as they are submissive to his dictates. So soon as there is any appearance of an attempt to dispute this dominion, his tone changes, and he re-asserts his right to rule in unmistakable language. Not that in this there was any hypocrisy, or even conscious inconsistency. No doubt he was quite sincere in his professions of self-abnegation. As between himself and God, there could be no merit in anything that he had done or taught, for the power and the knowledge had been given him; and when he had done his utmost, he was still an unprofitable servant. But as between himself and his converts, the case was different. The very circumstance that annihilated his merit as against God, enhanced his claims upon them; or, at the lowest, if he did possess the qualifications upon which he insists, there was nothing in the fact that they had been conferred upon him by God which should derogate from his right to obedience at their hands. In and of himself he could ask nothing, excepting from their love and sympathy; but as the divinely-appointed Apostle,<sup>1</sup> chosen and set apart for the work of evangelizing the Gentiles, and the instrument of bringing the Corinthians into the Church of Christ, he had pretensions which he could not abdicate, and which in the interests of the cause he was bound to assert.

During the composition of this letter, something appears to have occurred to alter the feelings under which it was begun. The congratulations of the early chapters are exchanged

<sup>1</sup> Gal. i. 1: "An Apostle not of men, neither by men, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father."

for vehement denunciations of some unnamed opponent; and the mere statement of his own right to their obedience is succeeded by a vivid description of his past career, for the purpose of showing that, as regarded both labours and sufferings, he could claim, in comparison with his adversaries, not equality merely, but superiority. The natural conclusion appears to be, that before the letter was finished he had learned that a delegation from Jerusalem had reached Corinth, under some able and well-known leader, whose influence had recalled the majority of the Church to the party of Cephas, and who had not scrupled to speak contemptuously of Paul himself and of his pretensions, contrasting his claims with those of the Apostles or with his own. Who was the leader can only be conjectured; but if we draw our conclusions from the language of Paul himself, without qualifying its purport by our own preconceptions as to what might be probable, there can be but little doubt that it must have been one of the Apostles; and in that case we should naturally think of Peter. Paul describes his opponents as false Apostles, transforming themselves into Apostles of Christ; and this, admittedly, can only imply that they claimed the title of Apostle. It is, however, impossible that any one among them could have falsely made such a claim; for one of their grounds of attack upon Paul was, that he had assumed the title and authority of an Apostle, although he did not possess the incommunicable dignity of the office. For them to have taken the title, would consequently have contradicted their fundamental principle, and have furnished a justification of that very assumption which they condemned. And besides, it is with these false Apostles that he compares himself; for those who are bold (xi. 22) can be no others than those who glory (xi. 12), whom in the next verse he describes as false Apostles; and the terms of the comparison apply more aptly to the Twelve than to inferior teachers, with whom Paul would have disdained to be measured. The "false brethren," on the ordinary hypothesis, were far below the Twelve—at the utmost, their emissaries and representatives, and nearly

all would deny them even that character. To have made such men the standard by which to estimate his labours, his sufferings, and his gifts, would have been to acquiesce in the inferior position they assigned to him; and against this the whole Epistle protests. Asserting his own Apostleship, it could only be with the older Apostles that he would consent to be compared, for only thus could he hope to substantiate his assertion. What would it have availed to the purpose of his argument to have proved that he was as much Christ's, or as true a Hebrew, or as efficient a minister of the Gospel,<sup>1</sup> as some obscure representative of the Apostles, or as some one yet more obscure, who had dared to act in their name without their authority? His adversaries might have admitted all this, and still have argued that it brought him no nearer to an equality with the Twelve. Nor can it be said that Paul would not have spoken in such language of any of the Twelve, for he twice refers to them in a phrase, "your *extra super* Apostles,"<sup>2</sup> showing how little respect he was disposed to accord them when they were personally opposed to him, or when their authority was invoked against him. It is obvious that, in the latter of the two passages last referred to, he is only carrying out the comparison previously instituted, and he certainly would neither have described delegates from Jerusalem as Apostles, nor have consented to argue that he was only not inferior to them. However difficult, therefore, it may be to believe that Paul would have spoken thus contemptuously of any of the Twelve, or have called them false Apostles, deceitful workers, assuming the appearance of Apostles of Christ, while they were in truth the ministers (deacons) of Satan,<sup>3</sup> it would seem that this conclusion is inevitable. And, after all, the language is not so much stronger than that employed in the letter to the Galatians in

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. x. 7, xi. 22, 23.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 5, xii. 11—"των ὑπερβαν ἀποστολων," translated in the Authorized Version as "the very chiefest Apostles." But this translation, though veiling the contemptuous irony of the phrase, keeps in view the circumstance that the most eminent of the Twelve must have been the subject of comparison.

<sup>3</sup> Comp. Rev. ii. 9.

reference to Peter individually, as well as in conjunction with the other "pillar" Apostles, as to justify us in rejecting this conclusion upon any supposed ground of inconsistency with his habits of controversy.

We know nothing, really, of the effect of this letter, or of Paul's subsequent relations with the Corinthians. The only further information supplied by himself as to his position at the time is silent as to these topics. We learn, indeed, no more than<sup>1</sup> that he is looking forward with much anxiety to his intended visit to Jerusalem; doubtful whether even the liberal contributions he was about to carry to the church of that place would suffice to win him a favourable reception. And we should suppose from his language that the collection had been completed both in Macedonia and Achaia, and that nothing remained but that he should set forth on his journey at the head of their representatives, bearing with them the contributions of these churches.

Before commencing his journey, however, he had written and despatched the Epistle to the Romans, containing an elaborate exposition of his views, and, apparently, intended to set forth fully the grounds upon which they rested and were to be justified. There appears great probability in the suggestion of M. Renan, that this was a circular letter, adapted to the various churches, to which a copy was sent by separate introductions and conclusions, which, as far as possible, were inserted in the copy ultimately adopted for the use of the Church. This hypothesis not only accounts for the various independent terminations, but explains how it happened that so elaborate a production should have been addressed to a church with which the Apostle had no previous intercourse, and which he was even uncertain whether he should ever see at all. It was natural, if he had written this as a manifesto of his views, that he should have sought to prepare the way for his contemplated visit to Rome by sending a copy to the brethren of that place; but it is not so easy to understand why they should have been selected as the sole

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xv. 25 ff.

recipients of a work so carefully reasoned. It is not as though Paul were unconscious of the power which his rare skill as a writer enabled him to exercise. He certainly, no less than his adversaries, felt that his letters were weighty and powerful. It would have been almost a waste of effort, therefore, to confine to one church, and that of quite secondary importance at the time, a work which was intended to set forth in their full proportions the doctrines that he taught, and to exhibit their accordance with the providence of God, and with the sacred writings of the Jews; thus commending them not only to the Gentiles, who had not the Law, but also to the Jews, to whom that Law had been revealed. If the unknown Christians at Rome required and were entitled to such a communication, surely the churches he had founded, and which were then solicited to forsake him for other teachers, had an equal claim, and probably even greater need. He had been driven from Ephesus; he had been beset with troubles and fightings in Macedonia; he was opposed in Corinth; and he was now about to leave the region in which he had so long laboured, for the purpose of undertaking a journey to the extreme West, from which he might never return. It was only natural that he should take some means to secure to his converts a permanent record and justification of the truths he had taught among them—something that might enable them to give a reason for the faith that was in them. Nor can we suppose that when he had completed a writing eminently adapted for the purpose, as this Epistle unquestionably is, he would have refrained from furnishing them with a copy; in which case it would be more courteous, and therefore more in accordance with his habit, to have addressed it to them by name, with just such modifications as might render it suitable to their circumstances, and to have added his usual salutations and benedictions at the end. Even if we suppose that while with them he had taught similar doctrines—and this is doubtful, at least in the case of the churches in Macedonia and Corinth—they would not have formed the staple of his teaching; or if they had, they would still



require to be supplemented by some more permanent record. Apart, therefore, from the arguments based upon the composition of the letter itself, which are forcibly stated by M. Renan, there is in the nature of his own position, and of that of his converts in the various cities in which he had preached, a perfectly valid ground for supposing that this letter was intended for the use of the churches in general, and not for that of the church of Rome alone.

The general argument in this letter is substantially identical with that contained in his letter to the Galatians, though more carefully worked out; and this gives additional reason for supposing that it was not a mere occasional production, but something intended to be permanent and general. The former letter had been written under the influence of feelings which prevented the full development of the Apostle's conception; or possibly that conception had not been completely formed in his own mind at the time; and it was encumbered with personal allusions and invectives, to which it would be inexpedient to give a wider circulation than they had already attained. As, however, reflection and controversy had only confirmed his confidence in the force of the arguments there employed, he deemed it expedient to give to them a more complete and systematic form, while freeing them from all that was temporary and personal; to add such counsels and warnings as were suggested by the actual circumstances of the society, and to secure for these a more general diffusion. It is probable, therefore, that they had been re-cast more than once before they reached their final shape, and that a part of his time at Ephesus was thus occupied. His resolution to seek a new and distant field of labour could not have been suddenly formed. It had probably been gradually forced upon him by the desire of escaping to some place where he might hope to be beyond the reach of his adversaries, or where at least he might meet them upon more equal ground. So soon as the purpose was formed, it would suggest the expediency of leaving some authoritative statement of his doc-

trines, to which his followers might have recourse, for the purpose of confirming their own faith and answering the cavils of his opponents. There are difficulties in the way of forming any complete and consistent theory of the meaning and object of the Epistle, on the hypothesis of its having been addressed to the Christians in Rome only, which all critics (excepting, of course, those who assume it to have been written under the infallible verbal inspiration of the Holy Spirit for the use of the Church in all ages) have admitted. But these, though pointing unmistakably in the direction of its having been originally intended for a wider circle of readers, do not, in our view, possess half the probative force that arises from a consideration of the improbability that Paul, when about to leave, probably for ever, the various churches which he had founded, with a full knowledge that attempts would be made to introduce doctrines among them at variance with those he had taught, should have written so elaborate a statement of his own doctrines, and have sent it only to one church, and that unknown to him! And this improbability is heightened when we find that the line of argument is not new; that it does not spring freshly out of the occasion of writing; nor is it peculiar to a single church; but that it is taken up from a former letter, and is applicable to all the churches alike.

In reading this letter, we appear to notice a change of tone, as compared with those to the Corinthians, of the same kind as that which we have pointed out between the first of these latter and that to the Galatians. The doctrines which he teaches, indeed, are set forth with great fulness and breadth, and in the most uncompromising form. He does not recede one iota from his statement of the inadequacy of the Law, or of the grounds of the believer's acceptance with God; but these statements are set forth as conclusions of reason from premises, the truth of which his readers are assumed to recognize, and not as matters individually revealed to himself. The letter may be characterized as argumentative, not authoritative. His teaching is to be

received because it is consonant with the lessons of experience and the words of Scripture, not because of his apostolical authority. He is called an Apostle, and he has received grace and apostleship from Jesus Christ, but he makes no claim to obedience by reason of his office. There is even an implied admission that he is not an Apostle in the full sense of the term, when he calls himself the, or it may be only an, Apostle of the Gentiles.<sup>1</sup> For this restricts his share in the office to the one task of preaching the Gospel to them, and excludes those functions of Apostleship which were regarded by the Church as the exclusive property of the Twelve. In this sense, not only he, but Barnabas and Silas, would be Apostles; for they also had, jointly with himself, carried the glad tidings to the Gentile world; and doubtless they, no less than he, had continued their labours in this field up to the time at which he was writing. And though he magnifies his office, it is not that it gives him a right to dictate in matters of faith or conduct, but that it has enabled him to bring forth fruit in the conversion of multitudes to Christ.

The Epistle to the Romans is generally supposed to have been sent from Corinth, at which place Paul is assumed to have passed the three months spent in Greece. In support of this view may be urged the mention of Phœbe, a deaconess of the church of Cenchræa, who, as being about to visit the place (or one of the places) to which the letter was addressed, is thought to have been its bearer; and the assumed identity of the Gaius who is Paul's host at the time, with the Gaius whom he baptized at Corinth. These are very slight and uncertain indications; but, if there were no countervailing arguments, they might induce us to acquiesce in the assumption, especially as he had declared his intention of visiting the city before proceeding to Jerusalem. But there are two considerations which appear to render it improbable—the silence of the writer of the Acts, and the circumstance that when Paul does start for Jerusalem he is not accom-

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xi. 13.

panied by a single Corinthian deputy. The former of these, indeed, is susceptible of another explanation. Still, it is not easy to suppose, if Paul had visited Corinth and had been welcomed, and set forward on his journey by the church of that place, that the writer, who had described his former visit, and had dwelt upon his long stay and successful preaching there, should have ignored the importance of that city and its peculiar relation to the Apostle, and have merely written of his going to Greece,<sup>1</sup> and abiding there three months. And still more significant is the fact, as to which there seems to be no doubt, that no delegate from Corinth formed part of his company. We see, in the first letter to the Corinthians,<sup>2</sup> his original intention was that their contributions should be carried to Jerusalem by persons chosen by themselves, he himself accompanying them if he found it expedient to make the journey. And in the second, though there is no reference to the mode in which the collection should be sent, yet it would be implied in their case, as in that of other churches, that some of the brethren of the place should be the bearers under his leadership. This arrangement was prompted not only by a wish to escape the charges of malversation which his enemies might urge, but also to gratify the natural desire of members of a provincial church to visit the metropolis of the faith, and to make the acquaintance of the heads of the society under circumstances that would secure a certain consideration to themselves, and thus to strengthen the bonds of union between the scattered members of the community. It would seem impossible, therefore, that Paul should have accepted the charge personally, and equally impossible that it should have been sent by separate messengers if he had visited the church and had succeeded in re-establishing his authority. The names of the delegates by whom he was accompanied are given<sup>3</sup> in such a manner as apparently to exclude the idea that some of them, though not natives of Corinth, might have borne the contribu-

<sup>1</sup> Not even Achaia !

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 3, 4.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xx. 4.

tions of that place;<sup>1</sup> for, had such been the case, it would have been natural to describe them not by their birthplace, which was immaterial, but by the names of the churches of which they were the representatives.

Against these considerations may be set the tranquil tone of the letter to the Romans, and the terms in which the collection is mentioned, implying, apparently, that it was completed, and that Paul as a matter of course was to bear it to Jerusalem. But we see that in this letter he is altogether silent as to the existence of any questions between himself and others, whether within or without the Church. He makes no reference to the fact of his having been shortly before driven from Ephesus, or to the troubles that he encountered in Macedonia, or to the hostility by which he was threatened in Greece; though it could scarcely be but that the enmity, which assumed so formidable a shape when he was about to leave as to compel him to change his intended route, had broken out on more than one occasion during his stay. Obviously, therefore, we can draw no inference as to the circumstances of the church in Corinth, supposing him to have been there, or as to the absence of strife among the brethren and of opposition to himself, from his leaving them unnoticed. And in writing such a letter, whether solely to an unknown and distant church, according to the ordinary view, or, as we suppose, also to the chief churches in the various regions in which he had preached, it would have been unwise and derogatory to have dwelt upon mere personal troubles, or to have called attention to the strife

<sup>1</sup> This is half suggested by Dean Stanley when he conjectures that the unnamed brethren who accompanied Titus as bearers of the second Epistle might have been Trophimus and Tychicus (St. Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians, "The Mission of Titus, vii. 16—24"), who might have been charged to carry the contribution whose collection they had superintended. This is of course possible, but altogether improbable, excepting upon the supposition of some quarrels in the Church, or some estrangement between Paul and the Corinthians; for, otherwise, they would have carried out his suggestion of sending it by some of their own body, and he would have been glad to swell his party by members of so important a church. And the conjecture is purely gratuitous.



which his proceedings had excited. Nor must we forget that we are altogether ignorant of the time at which the letter was written, and of the place from which it was sent, and that our ignorance on these subjects necessarily affects any conclusions we may draw; except that the terms in which he refers to his bearing the contribution from Achaia to Jerusalem renders still more significant the fact, that when he does leave Greece no delegate from that district was with him.

Orthodox commentators have been troubled by none of these difficulties. They have pleased themselves in representing Paul as following up his second Epistle by a visit to Corinth, invested with plenary jurisdiction as Apostle, and armed with the power of working miracles, and employing his official authority and supernatural gifts to subdue his opponents and reward his adherents, and thus to reduce to harmony the jarring and discordant elements in the Church. But for such a representation there is no basis whatever, excepting the obviously unreliable assumption that he must have done whatever he promised or threatened to do, and that his opponents would be afraid or unable to withstand him in person. But he had already failed twice to keep his promise to visit the Corinthians. He had, previously to our first letter, intimated his intention of coming there direct, and then proceeding to Macedonia,<sup>1</sup> probably in the letter which is lost, and had failed to do so; and by this change of plan he had exposed himself to the charge of timidity or infirmity of purpose—not altogether unjustly, so far as the former imputation is concerned. And afterwards, though he had come to Macedonia, he had shrunk from proceeding onwards until he had tried the effect of a second letter. And if he had thus on two occasions abandoned a purpose which he had announced, we have clearly no right to argue that he could not do so a third time. And great as might be his personal influence, it had not prevented him from being driven from Ephesus and attacked in Macedonia. If, therefore, he had not shrunk from the conflicts that he knew would be pro-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 5; 2 Cor. i. 17 ff.

duced by his presence, we may be quite certain that he would not be able to allay them. He might triumph over his opponents, but he could not win them to his side. His eloquence and his influence would avail nothing against their intense convictions, backed by the authority, real or assumed, of the Apostles. The preconceptions of orthodoxy are too firmly rooted to be shaken by any individual efforts; and these preconceptions were arrayed against him. But it is quite possible that the same hesitations by which he was assailed after the despatch of the former letter may have made him again defer his visit until his return from the contemplated interview with the leaders of the church in Jerusalem; since in a peaceful journey to Rome it would be easy, and perhaps convenient, to take Corinth in his way. It can scarcely be doubted that, but for the news brought by Titus, he would have abandoned the project altogether; and the further news that reached him while engaged in writing the second letter, though it roused him to vehement indignation and self-assertion in the first instance, might, after time had been allowed for reflection, suggest the wisdom of delay. The description in the Clementines, therefore, which represents him as shrinking from a meeting with Peter, and as worsted in every encounter when they do meet, may be only the distorted reminiscence of a true tradition. And this view derives additional support from his subsequent conduct. It would, indeed, have been a humiliating sequel to such a triumph as is ordinarily assumed, that he should have submitted without a remonstrance in Jerusalem to the dictation of the very party whose representatives he had just before reduced to submission in Corinth.

A consideration, too, of his proceedings as described in the Acts, suggests that his stay in Greece, whether at Corinth or elsewhere, had been cut short. We see that he only intended to arrive at Jerusalem in time for the Feast of Pentecost, and that he had proposed to proceed by way of Syria. For this purpose he need not have left Greece more than a few weeks previously, and not sooner than he ultimately left Troas. Instead of

this, however, he leaves Greece early enough to be in Philippi before the Passover; and as the plots of the Jews, to which his change of plan is attributed, are so described as to negative the idea that they could have accelerated his departure, the circumstance that he left prematurely adds another reason to those we have already given for supposing either that he did not visit Corinth, or that his presence excited dissensions which he was unable to allay. It may, perhaps, be urged, in answer to this, that but for the enforced alteration of plan, he might have reached Jerusalem in time for the Passover. But there is nothing to lead to such a view; and it is rendered improbable by the fact that he only arrived in Philippi just before it began, and therefore could scarcely have performed the much longer journey to Jerusalem in sufficient time.

We can partially realize Paul's position at this time. He stands alone; not that he is destitute of devoted followers and friends, but that he rests upon his own individual convictions, which are without support or confirmation from the other Apostles, or from the traditions of the Church. And these convictions he assumes to enforce upon the brethren, and to uphold against any opposition. They are not founded upon the teaching of Jesus during his lifetime; nor upon the instructions given to the Apostles after his resurrection; nor were they imparted by the Holy Spirit to the disciples on the day of Pentecost. They have been separately revealed to himself long afterwards, at or subsequently to his conversion. They cannot, therefore, be subject to any control from the recollection of those who had been the companions of Jesus upon earth, or from the views of those who had received divine inspiration subsequently. On the contrary, they, as the latest revelation, supersede all previous communications; so completely, that whoever preaches any other Gospel than that which he preaches, even though it might be founded upon the express words of Jesus himself, is accursed. That these pretensions should excite angry protests and unremitting opposition was natural, and,

indeed, inevitable; for, as we have seen, from this point of view the highest and most important function of Apostleship—that of bearing testimony to all that Jesus had said and done from the very beginning of his ministry<sup>1</sup>—would become superfluous. It might even be said that this particular qualification would be an injury instead of an advantage;<sup>2</sup> for those who had known Jesus so long and so intimately as a man, would be naturally inclined to regard him especially in that character; while the fact that they had been taught by him personally, and selected by him to preach the lessons they had thus learned, would tend to prejudice them against any claim to a revelation which superseded that made to themselves. If even there had been complete identity between the doctrines taught by Paul and those taught by the Twelve, this pretension to superiority must have been resented, and the resentment would be deeper in proportion to the originality of his doctrines; for this measured their divergence from those which Jesus had sanctioned, and which they preached. We need feel no wonder, therefore, if their influence was exerted against him, or if they themselves headed the opposition.

Under such circumstances, we can understand that the unaided efforts of Paul must have been powerless to avert, though they might delay, his defeat. He had entered upon the conflict with the fullest confidence of ultimate success; relying upon the continued adherence of the numerous converts whom he had evangelized, and upon the inherent power of the doctrines that he preached, to vindicate their own truth to those who heard them. But he was disappointed in both expectations. His converts, or a large proportion of them, listened willingly to men who came to them invested with the same character that he had possessed when he first preached to them, and who professed to speak in the name of the Apostles and the mother church, contrasting his claims to Apostleship with those of the Twelve.

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 22.

<sup>2</sup> M. Renan seems to be half of this opinion, in spite of the view he takes of the character and teaching of Jesus.—Saint Paul, p. 307 ff.

For it must be remembered that, however triumphant might be his vindication upon other points, it was necessarily weak upon this. He *had* assumed the title of Apostle upon his own sole authority, and he had never known Jesus during his human life; while those whom he opposed had been publicly selected by Jesus, and had been his daily companions on earth. He could not assert that Jesus, when he first appeared to him, had invested him with this rank; for we see, not only from the account of his proceedings in the Acts, but from his two letters to the Thessalonians, that he did not assume it from the beginning. When he first makes the claim, he describes himself as an Apostle, not by human appointment, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father;<sup>1</sup> but afterwards, to the Corinthians, when his title has been formally challenged, the proof of his Apostleship is partly that he has seen Jesus, but principally the success of his preaching the Gospel to them, and the signs and wonders by which it had been accompanied.<sup>2</sup> But the effect of his preaching would only be a proof to those who were already his followers, and the sight of Jesus would of itself confer an equal title upon each one of the five hundred brethren to whom, as he states, Christ had appeared; while as, according to the belief of the age, Satan could invest his servants with the power of performing miracles, no signs and wonders could accredit a teacher who, as was alleged, preached false doctrines. It was only natural, therefore, that his authority, so far as it rested upon his assumed Apostleship, should be superseded by that of the Twelve.

And with regard to his peculiar doctrines, it may be suspected that they were far too subtle and refined to form the basis of a

<sup>1</sup> Gal. i. 1.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 1, 2; 2 Cor. xii. 12. The latter passage is often referred to as a conclusive proof that Paul possessed the power of working miracles. But, to say nothing of the writings of modern spiritualists, Wesley and Whitfield might have written in the same strain to many of the churches they had founded, and so probably might many modern revivalists, both in the United Kingdom and the United States, to congregations they have addressed. Wesley, indeed, had obviously a strong faith in his own miraculous gifts; but the Wesleyan Methodists, in spite of their discipline, are too much penetrated by the modern spirit to adopt this belief.



distinctive organization among such persons as he addressed. In so far as he preached the resurrection of Jesus, and his return to earth to raise the departed, and to transform the living saints—and this was the essential feature of his teaching—he was on a level with the Apostles; for this was what they also taught; and they, as well as he, enforced brotherly love, temperance, chastity, sobriety, and well-doing. In so far as he sanctioned the eating of idol meats, the many, who were necessarily destitute of the *gnosis*<sup>1</sup> that showed it to be harmless—which would always be the peculiar possession of a few—would be shocked by the laxity he permitted, in their anxiety to signalize their renunciation of idol worship by even an exaggerated abstinence from everything connected with it. And the questions which he raised as to the obligations of the Law and the speculative grounds of admission to the privileges of the kingdom, though no doubt full of interest to a few, were unsuited to the general apprehension. A few phrases might be caught up from his writings, and pass into the current Christian language,<sup>2</sup> but the majority would be indifferent or averse to these speculations, or fear to trust their own judgment in their solution. They would, therefore, be prepared to acquiesce in any rule that might be laid down, or any solution that might be declared by authority; and, probably, be rather disposed to err on the side of observance than of freedom. We at first sight might be inclined to assume that Paul, preaching deliverance from the yoke of the Law, or from any merely formal obligations, would, as a matter of course, carry all the Gentile converts with him; but it is probable that the contrary was the case. We may rather conclude that there was nothing by which such converts would be more attracted than by definite rules of conduct and a prescribed religious ritual; and the more stringent and elaborate these

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 1 ff.

<sup>2</sup> As we see in the first Epistle of Clement, which is paraded as Evangelical, but which, though containing here and there a few of Paul's phrases, is altogether at variance with his spirit. And this is almost the only instance in which even his phrases are found in the Apostolical Fathers.

were, the more welcome they would be. Everywhere, therefore, the party of the Apostles assumed the preponderance; and Paul, though protesting to the last, was compelled at length to recognize their triumph as an accomplished fact, and to accommodate himself as best he might to the unavoidable consequences.

Those who believe in the supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit to all the Apostles alike, including Paul, will of course reject this view, and especially the idea that any one of the Apostles should have led the opposition at Corinth, and have been referred to by Paul in the language we have cited. And we may allow that, as he does not mention any by name, it is possible to put another construction upon his language than that which it appears to us to bear. But the Apostles could not have remained neuter; nor could they have afforded him any marks of encouragement or sympathy without at once calling forth some acknowledgment. We can see how intense were his feelings, and how vivid their expression; how deeply he mourns the estrangement of former friends, and how bitterly he resents the conduct that produced it; how sensitive he is to personal imputation, and how he is cheered by any expression of friendship. If the news brought by Titus as to the effect of his letter upon the church at Corinth gave him such pleasure, much more would he have been cheered and solaced by some intimation from one of the "pillars" of the Church—Peter, or James, or John—disavowing all share in the hostility that he encountered, and exhorting him to persevere. And he could not have failed to refer to it, not merely for the purpose of expressing his gratitude for the support thus afforded, but for the purpose also of proving that his adversaries were disowned by the very men whose sanction they pretended to possess. At the time of writing his last letter to the Corinthians, probably three years had elapsed since the dispute at Antioch; so that there had been both time and opportunity for such an intimation to have reached him. But there is no reference of the sort; nothing to show that his teaching was approved by any of the Twelve, or that the conduct

of his opponents was disavowed by them ; and nothing to indicate any change of feeling towards them on his part. If, therefore, the Apostles are to be exonerated from the accusation (as such reasoners would deem it) of having originated or sanctioned the opposition against Paul, it can only be on the assumption that they remained idle spectators of the conflict, careless, so long as their own position was not endangered, what their colleague was suffering. But this is impossible. They could not have justified such conduct either to their own consciences or to the Church. To have refused to take a part in a dispute which involved issues affecting so deeply the interests of the faith, would have been a virtual abdication of their authority, and a cowardly abandonment of the responsibilities which their office imposed. But no such stimulus would be needed ; for the claims of Paul could not be admitted without sanctioning a principle that endangered their position in the most essential part, and that was at variance with the order and destructive of the unity of the Church.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The first Epistle of Peter is often cited as proving the essential unity of his opinions and those of Paul, and, therefore, the impossibility that he should have taken such a part in the opposition as we have suggested. But, 1, identity of opinion on speculative matters would not touch the question as to Paul's assumption of the title of Apostle, or Paul's bitter denunciation of himself ; and, 2, the Epistle, if genuine, was written some years after this, certainly after Paul's to the Romans and Ephesians, of both of which the author largely avails himself ; some years, therefore, after Paul's public submission to the church at Jerusalem. It would, consequently, warrant no inference as to Peter's feelings or opinions during the first few years after Paul had attacked him at Antioch, and had held him up as an example of time-serving and hypocrisy to the churches in Galatia.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE DOCTRINES TAUGHT BY PAUL.

Improbability that these doctrines should have been held from the beginning, or should have been the motives of his conversion—The views of Paul, like those of other men, capable of expansion and change, and affected by circumstances—Views of original disciples—Jewish Law divine and binding, and therefore sufficient—Perfect obedience impossible and not required—Law recognized and provided for failure—This view results from conduct of disciples as described in Acts—Nothing in speeches of Peter and Stephen inconsistent with Jewish ideas—Hints of Paul's later views in letters to Thessalonians—But only hints—When Paul had to justify his practices, then it was found that the whole question of the obligation of Law was involved—Difficulties of Paul—Mode in which he reconciles the Divine character of the Law and its abrogation in Christ—Repellent to Jews—They trusted in mercy of God to pass over their inevitable shortcomings—Difference between Paul and liberal party among Jews—Reasoning of Paul not satisfactory to opponents in Church—His view of matter, and of the contrast between flesh and spirit, probably regarded as presumptuous—Light in which his opinions would be regarded at the time—Novel conceptions in Church, and resembling speculations of rival teachers—Answering to facts in human nature, but not explaining them or accounting for existence of evil—Possible relations to Gnosticism—His writings quoted in early Church in favour of asceticism—His view of nature of Jesus—Possibly shared by his opponents—But more probably differing from theirs, as leading to different conclusions—Doctrine of Election—Necessary to account for rejection of Jews—Probably result of his experience in preaching the Gospel—Perhaps resulting from his own conversion—His reasoning necessarily inconclusive to Jews—Paul not responsible for consequences deduced from his writings—His object practical—One main fact to be explained, calling of Gentiles and rejection of Jews—Ground of forgiveness of sins, obedience to Law insufficient—Death of Christ the ground—Neither reward nor punishment by way of natural consequence—Some passages appear to conflict with this view—Uncertainty as to fate of unbaptized—Possibly only those punished who had opposed or persecuted the Church—Paul would probably have repudiated modern doctrines founded on his writings—Questions treated by Paul still subsisting, but presented under new conditions—His views natural at the time, but apparently inconsistent with observed order of the world—God, whether the Father or the just Ruler of mankind, would not limit His favour to one individual or family or people—Nothing in history answering to such a limitation—Jewish history—History of Christianity—Paul's ignorance of numbers of human race and of duration of the world excuses his views.

As the four letters which are chiefly important for the purpose of determining the peculiar opinions of the Apostle Paul,

were written during the period embraced between his departure from Antioch and his final visit to Jerusalem, the present is the appropriate place for an attempt to ascertain the nature and aspect of those opinions. We have already pointed out the seeming impossibility that they could have been such as he entertained when he joined the sect at Jerusalem, both from a consideration of his character and position, and from his own statements on the subject. And it is still more difficult to suppose that it was any such views as these that determined his conversion. There is nothing in favour of this last supposition but the assumption that, either supernaturally, or by some mysterious mental process which anticipated the slow teaching of experience, his ultimate conceptions were completely formed at the first, so that there was neither change nor progress. And any such assumption is purely gratuitous. Even if we suppose, as appears to be implied by his letter to the Galatians,<sup>1</sup> that from the moment of his conversion he realized that the Gentiles were the special objects of his mission, and this is very improbable, there would still be nothing to warrant the inference that the scheme of doctrine which he sets forth in that letter had been elaborated at the time. His object in writing is not to show that his opinions were unchanged, but that they were original and independent; so that the question when they were revealed to him was immaterial to his argument. And the assumption is not only gratuitous; it is contradicted by such evidence as we possess—the story of his life as related in the Acts and his letters to the Thessalonians. Indeed, it is almost necessary to its support that these four letters—Romans, Corinthians, Galatians—should be regarded as his only authentic productions; an hypothesis which not only has the inconvenience of limiting his activity as a letter-writer to two or three years of his life, but implies a wholesale fabrication of documents, and their acceptance as genuine by the Church; which is antecedently improbable, and can only be maintained by assuming the very point in issue

<sup>1</sup> Gal. i. 15 ff.



Let it, however, be once admitted that Paul was a true human being, engaged in labours which brought him into contact with numerous varieties of opinion, and involved disputations with men both within and without the Church, and it will be seen, not only was it almost inevitable that his views should undergo expansion and modification, but also that the form in which they were presented should have a special reference to the controversies in which he was engaged.

Although we cannot accept the story of his conversion as given in the Acts as literally true, we may believe it to be an idealized representation of the circumstances. But if so, that which affected him was simply the proof of the resurrection afforded by the appearance to himself. It was, we must presume, on this occasion that Jesus was seen by him also as by one born out of due time, and in this manner that God revealed His Son in him. And though this does not altogether exclude, it is at first sight incompatible with, the idea that he had previously been led to feel the inadequacy of the Law, and it is inconsistent with the idea that this feeling was the leading motive of his conversion. Jesus, by his appearance, was proved to Paul to have been raised from the dead, and thus to be the Messiah, the son of David; but there could be no necessary connection between the possession of these characters and the abrogation of the Law, or the substitution of some new scheme of acceptance with God in its place. There might have been, but there is no evidence that there was, a vague feeling of dissatisfaction in his mind, analogous to that which appears to have been felt by many of the prophets; a sense of the want of harmony between the ritual observances with which the Law was chiefly concerned, and the removal of sin, or the reconciliation of man to God. But this would not have led him, any more than it led Jesus, to question the obligation of the Law, but to seek how it might be supplemented, or rather fulfilled, by observing it, not only in the letter, but in the spirit. And there was not, so far as our information extends, anything in the tenets of the sect of

the Nazarenes, or in their practices at the time of his journey to Damascus, to imply either the insufficiency or the abrogation of the Law. We therefore regard the doctrines set forth in the letters we are considering as representing not his original, possibly not his fundamental, conception of Christianity, but the form which that conception took in view of the questions in which he was at the time involved. It will assist us, then, in our inquiry if we attempt to ascertain what were the opinions of the Church, or of that section of it against which Paul was contending.

Obviously, the first and essential point of the belief of the infant Church was that Jesus was the Messiah of Hebrew prophecy, proved to be so by his life on earth, and still more emphatically by his being raised from the dead; and that he was almost immediately to return to earth to establish his visible kingdom at Jerusalem. But this involved no alterations in their religious conceptions or practices. Their belief in Jesus sprang out of their antecedent belief in the Law and the Prophets, which in its turn it tended to strengthen. Jesus was the Messiah, the Prince, the Anointed of Jehovah, who was to establish the kingdom of heaven upon earth. But the Law which Jehovah had given to Israel was not on that account abrogated, nor could their obligation to obey it be in any degree diminished. On the contrary, we might anticipate, what we appear to find in the Acts, that the prospect of the immediate establishment of that kingdom would invest the Law with peculiar sacredness; so that they would devote themselves to its services, to the exclusion of all secular pursuits; frequenting the Temple day after day for the purpose of prayer and sacrifice, in order that their Lord, when he came, might find them with their loins girded and their lamps burning, prepared at once to join him.

But then if the Law were still binding, it must, it would seem, be still sufficient. There is nothing to induce us to suppose that there existed among the Jews at this time, or among the early disciples, any such idea as that perfect obedience could be justly

exacted from an imperfect being such as man confessedly was. The Law condescended to human infirmity, and recognized and provided for human shortcomings. If there were passages such as that cited by Paul,<sup>1</sup> which appeared to denounce a curse upon those who failed to fulfil the Law in every particular, they would refuse to accept such passages in their literal sense: for they would confront them with many others in which God had promised pardon and blessing upon the terms of repentance and amendment. There might, indeed, have been individuals who believed that their complete fulfilment of every legal obligation entitled them to the favour of God, which they would forfeit by any failure; but they must have been few. The majority would trust in His mercy, and would repudiate the notion, either that it was possible by prayers, almsgivings, and sacrifice, to compel Him to admit them to His kingdom, or that He would exclude them because of that imperfection which belonged to them as human beings. Jehovah was not in their eyes a hard Master, who had imposed tasks beyond the strength of the vast majority of His servants, in order that He might have a pretext for refusing to pay them the stipulated reward. He was a Father who had established rules for the guidance of His children, which, although He expected them to strive to obey, yet whose love and compassion would excuse their inevitable failure. One of His special attributes was, that He was a God pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression. They would, consequently, believe that every sincere attempt to fulfil the Law would be pleasing in His sight, and that a man's offerings of obedience as well as of gifts would be accepted according to that which he had, and not according to that which he had not. It would not have occurred to them that during the long centuries that had elapsed from Moses to Jesus, the whole people of Israel had been deluded by a system which professed to entitle them to the Divine favour, but only upon terms which none could fulfil. That which had sufficed for Joshua, Samuel, David, and Heze-

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iii. 10.

kiah, would surely suffice for them; and each one of these, though weak and imperfect, had been accepted of Jehovah.

This view not merely arises from the conduct attributed to the disciples, but it is confirmed by the description of their popularity with the multitude, who would not have regarded with favour any sect that disparaged their pretensions, or impugned the obligations of the Law. And it is confirmed even more conclusively by the statement that the disciples, who were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, preached the word to Jews only. If they had understood that the death of Jesus had laid a new and independent foundation for acceptance with God, there could have been no reason for such a limitation of their preaching; for upon that foundation Gentiles might build no less securely than Jews. The only distinction between the two as objects for conversion was, that the one did, and the other did not, obey the Law of Moses and possess the seal of the covenant. Whatever value the disciples might attach to belief, not in the work, or blood, or death, but in the name of Jesus,<sup>1</sup> and whatever they might anticipate as the special consequences of admission into the sect by being baptized into that name, it was impossible they could have imagined that none but those who thus believed and were baptized would be admitted to his kingdom. For in that case nearly the whole family of Abraham, though faithful to the covenant, would be excluded; all, indeed, excepting the insignificant fraction who, happening to reside in Jerusalem, were in a condition to hear and be convinced by their preaching.

Against this view may be urged the speeches attributed to Peter and Stephen. But apart from the difficulty of regarding those speeches as accurate, they give little support to the orthodox view. If we interpret them, not from the standpoint of those to whom they were addressed, which is obviously the only just method, but from that of later ecclesiastical dogma, it may be possible to find in them something anti- or

<sup>1</sup> Acts iv. 12.

hyper-judaical. With the exception, however, of one passage, they are confined strictly within the circle of received Jewish ideas; and that passage has rather a Gnostic than an orthodox sound, since the saving virtue is attributed to the name,<sup>1</sup> by the use of which the previous miracle had been wrought. It can scarcely be necessary to point out that there is no more reference to the blood of Christ, or to the doctrine of the Atonement, or to the divinity of Jesus, or to justification by faith, or to the abolition of the Law, than there is to the efficacy of sacraments,<sup>2</sup> or to apostolical succession, or to the powers of the Church, or to the primacy of Peter. Whatever of dignity or of power may belong to Jesus has been imparted to him by God, who worked in and by him during his life, and afterwards raised him from the dead, and made him both Lord and Messiah. And nothing is attributed to him which Jewish writings current at the time, either sacred or apocryphal, did not expressly attribute to the Messiah whom they predicted. Candidates for admission into the society are required to repent, and to be baptized into the name of Jesus for the remission of their sins; and upon this they are to receive the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> But this could not, in the idea of the writer, have implied any new doctrine, since in his Gospel he describes John the Baptist as preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; the difference introduced by the Apostles being apparently that they baptized into the name of Jesus expressly as that Messiah whom John had preached. Both baptisms required confession and repentance, and both implied, or it may be supposed effected, the remission of sins. And the converts, who must have been familiar with the baptism of John, could not regard the baptism of the Apostles as placing them in any new relation to the Law, or as affecting their rights and privileges as Jews.

<sup>1</sup> Acts iv. 12. We are unfamiliar with the idea of any intrinsic efficacy residing in a mere name, so that its employment could cure disease or repel demons, and we therefore miss the point of the speech in the mind of the writer.

<sup>2</sup> Comp., however, Acts ii. 38, so far as the sacrament of baptism is concerned.

<sup>3</sup> Acts ii. 38.



We have already attempted to indicate the process by which Paul was led to a practical neglect of the Law when living among Gentiles, both in his own conduct and in preaching the Gospel; and how the laxities which he practised and encouraged would be likely to provoke the action of the church at Jerusalem. But though we do not doubt that his convictions had gone along with and sanctioned his practices, it appears improbable that they had been formulated, or reasoned out, or pursued into their logical consequences. We seem to find in his letter to the Thessalonians some rudimentary traces of his later opinions in such expressions as, "that Jesus delivers believers from the wrath to come," and "that God had chosen them from the beginning;"<sup>1</sup> but they are obviously only rudimentary. If the latter may be said to contain the doctrine of election in germ, it is obvious that there is no reference whatever in the former to that of justification by faith. In both passages the Apostle is only referring to facts, or what he assumes to be such, and does not associate them with any doctrinal views. Both, indeed, are essential features of his later system; for the one makes Jesus the sole agent in the work of deliverance, without any aid from legal observances; and the other implies that the calling of the Thessalonians was the free and voluntary act of God. But they are left isolated; neither connected with each other, nor with any previous or ulterior reasoning. And both of these letters were written while Paul was sanctioning the practices that ultimately provoked the breach with the Church.

But as Paul, in spite of his refusal to submit to the authority of the Apostles, and the consequent withdrawal of their sanction, determined to continue to preach the Gospel, it was necessary for him to find some basis, not only for his assertion of independence, but also for the practices he pursued and sanctioned. And then it would be discovered that the question was wider and deeper than either party had probably realized in the first instance; involving nothing less than the continuance

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. i. 10; 2 Thess. ii. 13.

of the Law. The particular subject in dispute, whether Jews might eat with Gentiles, thus exposing themselves to the risk, it might be to the certainty, of eating meats offered in sacrifice to idols,<sup>1</sup> was comparatively small; but it could not be discussed from either side without involving the wider question. And though the authority of the Church also was at stake, yet their decree with regard to these abstinences would be defended, not upon its own intrinsic validity, but upon its conformity to the Law.

The church at Jerusalem, however, had only to refer to the Law itself; its voice was clear and unmistakable, and it was the voice of Jehovah. Whatever it forbade was, by force of that prohibition, sinful, and it needed no process of reasoning to prove this. But the position of Paul was far more difficult. He necessarily admitted the sacredness of the Law. It had been given by God, and it must therefore be holy, and, in a certain sense, sufficient. And yet, in order to vindicate his position, he must show that it had no relation to the Gentile, and had ceased to be binding on the Jew. So that, starting from the divine origin and perfect character of the Law, and leaving as a foregone conclusion its inapplicability to the new æon which Christ had inaugurated, he had to discover a process of reasoning by which to bring together these seemingly contradictory propositions. And he did this, partly by arguing, from the very perfection of the Law, that it was impossible to render a complete obedience to its requirements, and partly by pointing out another means of acceptance with God, through faith in His Son Jesus Christ. According to this argument, the Law itself was perfect; but the weakness of man's fleshly nature prevented him from rendering such an obedience as would entitle him to its rewards; and God, in condescension to this weakness, had provided a means of

<sup>1</sup> Possibly also to eating blood; but as this question is never referred to, we must suppose that it did not possess any practical importance, or perhaps it was overshadowed by the other greater matter. And yet we see in many of the writings of the Fathers that the eating of blood was connected with demon-worship, and was held to give demons power over the eater.

safety by the death and resurrection of Christ, of which all might avail themselves through faith. The Law said, as Jesus said afterwards:<sup>1</sup> This do, and thou shalt live. But, according to Paul, this was only a sublime irony, encouraging men to strive for that which was in its very nature unattainable, and leaving them to suffer the consequences of their unavailing efforts. And if under this aspect the Law was a mockery, under another it was an injury. It was the strength of sin; it gave an opportunity for the corruption of the flesh to slay those that trusted in it. Just and good in itself, it failed when brought into contact with fallen human nature, to which it had, nevertheless, been given, and aggravated the sins it was designed to eradicate. Obviously, in these views Paul was perilously near the Gnostic doctrine of the evil nature of the Law, and of its having been given by some inferior and imperfect power; and though he always kept himself free from this doctrine,—occupying, indeed, the very opposite position,—many of his reasonings might be, and no doubt were, employed to justify such an opinion.

It is true that there was one side of this argument which might be made to wear an aspect of graciousness. If perfect obedience were required, so that the man who failed in any particular was guilty of the whole Law—and there was a sense in which this was admitted by the Jews (though they drew the opposite conclusion from it)<sup>2</sup>—then, on the basis of covenant, something must be needed to purchase exemption from the consequences of this guilt. And Paul provided for this necessity by representing the death of Christ, among other figures, as a sacrifice which availed to reconcile man to God; and faith in Jesus, or in his death, or in his work, or in his resurrection, or in all, as enabling man to take advantage of this sacrifice, and thus as standing in the place of the impossible obedience. From this

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vii. 24—27. The difference between the teaching of Jesus in the first Gospel and that of Paul might be thus expressed: the one said, Do, and you will be safe; the other, Believe, and you shall be saved.

<sup>2</sup> James ii. 10, 11.

point of view, therefore, the coming of Christ was equally beneficial to the Jew and to the Gentile : to the former, by freeing him from an useless and dangerous burthen ; and to the latter, by opening for him a free entrance into the very highest privileges of the kingdom of heaven.

As, however, the first effect of this doctrine was to show to the Jews, both within and without the Church, that the very peculiarities upon which they had been taught to value themselves, as indicating their especial relation to Jehovah as their covenant God, were and had been a source of injury instead of advantage ; that they were no otherwise distinguished from Gentiles but in this, that the latter had been left to grope in darkness after God, in order to find a way to please Him ; while to themselves a way had indeed been revealed, but one which it was impossible they could follow ; so that the very perfection of the Law necessarily placed them, by reason of incapacity, upon the same level that the Gentiles occupied by reason of ignorance,—it could scarcely be expected to find acceptance with them. It would appear that their position both in the past and the present was inferior to that of the Gentiles who had not the Law. Not only had its possession brought upon the nation a series of calamities designed to punish its non-observance, but when, in consequence of these, they had for generations observed it faithfully, according to their ability, they were told that their best efforts were worthless, and that they were as far from the favour of God as ever. That which the voice of Jehovah had revealed in thunder upon Mount Sinai—which had for a thousand years formed the basis of their acceptance with Him—their obedience to which, incomplete as it might be, had, as they were taught, been uniformly rewarded by the peace and prosperity of their kingdom, and disobedience to which had been punished by wars and exile—was henceforth to be proclaimed as a mockery, something which never had any value or efficacy in itself, had slain all who had trusted in it, and now was expressly abrogated by the death of Christ. We cannot wonder that such doctrines

should have been repudiated by the church of Jerusalem, should have repelled and exasperated the Jews, and should have met with slow acceptance among Gentile proselytes, many of whom had entered the Church by the gate of Judaism, and all of whom were taught to regard the Jewish Scriptures as sacred.

There was, nevertheless, an element of truth in these opinions of Paul, even from the point of view of his opponents, which most would be prepared to admit. Mere obedience to a formal rule could confer no title to the Divine favour; nor could any man claim merit with God, or assert a right to be rewarded for his actions. But though this would be freely admitted, it would be regarded as only half the truth; for just as it was impossible that man could claim acceptance with God as of right, so would it seem fitting that God should accept him as of grace; since his obedience, if imperfect, was sincere. If God had been a mere personification of the idea of law, then formal obedience would have sufficed; for law looks not to the motive, but to the act. But if He were a just Judge, knowing what was in man; searching the heart, and trying the outward act by the principles that prompted it; that would surely imply that He admitted the willingness of the spirit as atoning for the imperfect performance of the flesh. And still more, if He were a loving and merciful Father, long-suffering, and not willing that any should perish, it was impossible to suppose that He would despise the efforts of His worshippers. Rather, it was certain that He would pardon their inevitable shortcomings; for what father would exact the services of trained and vigorous manhood from the weakness of childhood or the inexperience of youth; or would for ever exclude his children from his favour for faults which they were unable to avoid? There might have been many, even among those who were baptized into the name of Jesus, as there have been since in all ages and sections of the Church, who attached an exaggerated value to their own performances, and who really did believe that they merited the favour of God; but even these would probably have admitted that their merit



was only relative, not absolute,<sup>1</sup> and that there were defects and errors, perhaps even sins, for which they must throw themselves upon His mercy. And on the other side there were none who would regard their observance of the Law as altogether valueless. It was their duty, no doubt; and the most complete and scrupulous performance of its precepts would not go beyond. But, nevertheless, to have done their duty to the best of their ability was something; and God, who had imposed the obligation, would acknowledge the performance, even though imperfect. For the human mind is almost unable to realize the idea that absolute, perfect obedience, in act and thought and feeling, can be needed. It recognizes instinctively the impossibility that it should be rendered, and refuses to suppose that it will be required.

It has been sometimes attempted to connect the views of Paul with those of the party among the Jews of which Hillel was a representative. These men admitted the relative unimportance of the Law, and taught that love to God and love to man were better than whole burnt-offerings and sacrifice; and they did not require Gentiles to be circumcised in order to secure the favour of Jehovah. But they also regarded the Law as binding upon Jews, and they must, consequently, have supposed that some advantage resulted from its observance. The Jews were the heirs of the covenant. They had been selected by Jehovah out of the whole earth to be a peculiar people to Himself, and the Law had been given to them exclusively as the seal of this relationship. They could not, therefore, according to their views of the Divine character, have regarded this in any other light than as a mark of His favour. Probably, indeed, they were content to leave these questions among the mysteries, the deep things of Jehovah; believing that He would amply satisfy the claims of His chosen people, and at the same time show mercy to the Gentiles who had believed in Him.

<sup>1</sup> As we see by the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. The former, though vaunting his obedience, thanks God for it, implying that the power had been given him; and that excludes the idea of any claim of merit against the Giver.

Between the opinions of these men and those put forth by Paul there was consequently an essential difference, for he regarded the Law as abrogated. It had no relation to the Gentiles; it had ceased to be binding on the Jews. And not only so, but it had never possessed any value; so that even while it was obligatory, those who had attempted to obey it were no better for their efforts. This difficulty is now sometimes evaded by regarding the requirements of the Law as types, and by attributing to the pious Jews an implicit faith in the antitype. Obviously, however, no such solution was present to the mind of Paul, and it could not have been accepted as satisfactory by any party among the Jews. For if under one aspect it gave meaning and dignity to prescriptions which the improved religious feeling of the age had begun to account trivial, under another it emphatically contradicted the uniform declarations of Jehovah, that the Law should be permanent. And though there are "contrasts of prophecy" as regards the rejection and restoration of the Jews, as well as the calling of the Gentiles, yet there is no such contrast in the Law with regard to its own perpetual obligation. So far from this, the sole ground for the casting off of Israel was, that the nation did not walk in the statutes and ordinances of Jehovah; and the promise of bringing it back was conditional upon its turning and obeying these. It would, indeed, require a subtle alchemy to extract from the Old Testament any promise that Jehovah should make the contempt and violation of the Law the condition of acceptance for the seed of Abraham.

As our immediate object is historical, simply to exhibit the opinions of Paul in relation to his position, we do not attempt to estimate the value of the reasonings by which he justifies his conclusions. But it is clear that they would not be convincing to his opponents. The example of Abraham, for instance, as we see from the Epistle of James, was capable of being regarded from an entirely opposite point of view—not derogating from the value of faith, regarded as trust in God and reliance upon His promises, and as prompting obedience to His commands; but not

admitting it to possess any value, regarded as a state which terminated in itself and apart from its results upon conduct. Abraham had shown his faith by obedience. God had given a command, coupled with a promise; and he had obeyed, believing that God was faithful. But the same was the case with the people of Israel. God had given a Law to them, and had promised His favour as the result of obedience. Every act of obedience was thus an act of faith, for it was prompted by a belief that God would do that which He had promised. If, therefore, the belief of Abraham was counted to him for righteousness, so, they would argue, would their own belief be; for it sprang from the same motive and led to the same conduct. And this argument would possess sufficient semblance of truth to satisfy all who did not regard Paul as infallibly inspired; as, of course, his opponents did not.

And the same would be the case with his other arguments. We cannot say how far they would be prepared to go with him in his views of the origin and nature of sin; the antagonism that he depicts between the flesh and the spirit; the former being the seat and the cause of evil, and fatally trammelling the holy aspirations and tendencies of the latter. Possibly, these were matters into which they did not care to follow him.<sup>1</sup> It was enough for them to know that, so far as they were concerned, Jehovah had given the Law, and Jesus had proclaimed its permanence, and had made its observance and enforcement the condition of an elevated rank in his kingdom; and that, so far as regarded the Gentiles, they might obtain an admission into that kingdom by professing a belief in Jesus, and by repentance and baptism into his name for the remission of their sins; when they also might raise themselves by submitting to the Law. But probably these speculations were regarded with distrust, as attempts to be wise above what was written. The Law and the Prophets were silent upon these topics. They dealt with sins simply as

<sup>1</sup> The analogous speculations of Philo and the Alexandrian school do not seem to have found any favour in Palestine.

breaches of the Divine commandments, and were content to regard them as in some sense caused by Jehovah himself. But, whatever might be their origin, they were actual facts in the history of the individual and the nation, which it was their duty to reprove and denounce, but which they were not called upon to explain. That Paul should attempt such an explanation, and make it the basis of his attacks upon the Law, would consequently be regarded as presumptuous as well as unsound. From this point of view, we can accordingly understand the parallel that was subsequently drawn between him and Simon Magus.

In this, as in other matters, it is difficult for us to be just to the party opposed to Paul. We do not look upon his writings in the light in which they would appear to his contemporaries, but in that cast upon them by the dogmas of the Church. To us, the views set forth are not novelties, but settled truths; not lawless speculations upon mysteries in their nature insoluble, but a divinely-propounded solution of these mysteries which we are to accept as final and sufficient. And their meaning has been so fenced in and guarded in some directions, and so elaborated and extended in others, that we can scarcely see them in their real aspect. Here, the obvious meaning is explained away, because to admit it would identify Paul with something like Manicheism;<sup>1</sup> and there, it is drawn out into consequences which certainly were not present to his mind; until the result is something very different from what he intended to teach, and what his readers understood. But if we look upon these doctrines as being, as they were at the time, entirely novel conceptions in the Church, bearing a perilous resemblance to doctrines promulgated by rival teachers, and employed to justify conclusions opposed to the plain language of the Scriptures, we can see the light in which they might be regarded, and how deep a repulsion they might excite. For the representation that the flesh—the

<sup>1</sup> Comp., among others, Reuss, *Histoire de la Théologie Chrétienne au Siècle Apostolique*, II. 30.

living body—is utterly opposed to God and goodness, necessarily tending to sin—always, indeed, sinful, and this by reason of the essentially evil nature of the matter of which it is formed ; while the spirit is allied to God, and has affinities with all that is good and pure, does apparently—may we not say, does really—imply that dualism upon which Gnosticism was founded, and which afterwards led to Manicheism. And it is opposed to many passages in the Hebrew Scriptures, in which the body, no less than the spirit, is represented as the workmanship of Jehovah. The adversaries of Paul, therefore, who regarded him as a frail and erring man, could not have accepted these doctrines as divinely inspired, even if they had not betrayed their human origin by their analogies to contemporary heresies.

Still we may recognize these views as answering to facts in our habitual experience. The difference which we are compelled to admit between knowledge and conduct, aspiration and performance ; the frequent triumph of the temporary over the permanent, and of the selfish over the benevolent impulses ; our lapses into error under the influence of some overmastering passion, even though we know that our lasting well-being will suffer,—testify to the existence of antagonistic principles in human nature which might suggest the explanation that Paul offers. And this antagonism has in all times been felt by men who have striven to conform their lives to the will of God, or to their own ideal. But an examination of the phenomena does not appear to show that the distinction between matter and spirit which he draws is an adequate explanation, under whatever aspect the subject may be regarded. The existence of evil as a fact is not made more intelligible. And it is not more easily reconciled with our conception of God as a Being of infinite benevolence, justice, wisdom, and power, by referring it to the qualities of matter. And there is a special difficulty suggested by this explanation ; since it seems to imply that matter is independent of God, and so antagonistic to Him, either as self-subsisting or as created by some inferior or hostile agency. There does not,



indeed, appear to be anything in the actual constitution of man corresponding to that distinction. The impulses of our physical nature, if the pleonasm may be pardoned, which in their excess or misdirection produce sin, are the necessary foundation of some of the highest virtues; and the suppression or destruction of these impulses by the spirit is not unfrequently, perhaps it is generally, accompanied by evils as great as those which are escaped. If the reasoning of Paul is to be interpreted literally, it would seem to be contrary to fact; for matter is not all evil even in the human body; nor is the human intellect or spirit all good. And if it be taken as a rhetorical amplification, directed, not against the moderate and regulated satisfaction of the bodily appetites, but against irregularities and abuses, then experience appears to show that the reasoning which he applies to the body is equally applicable to the spirit.

It was the existence of these and analogous difficulties that led the Gnostics into the contradictions and absurdities which, according to the Fathers, were found in their systems; for upon such a subject every attempted explanation, while it removed, or appeared to remove, the difficulty against which it was directed, necessarily provoked others in endless succession. Paul, no doubt, escapes most of these; but this may be because he leaves his system incomplete, only indicating the outlines, which may be filled up in such manner as the judgment of his commentator may prompt. We know nothing of the oral explanations by which his views were supplemented, or how he unfolded to those that were worthy, the hidden wisdom which he could not disclose to the weak brethren who formed the majority. We see, however, from the innumerable questions which have been since raised as to the scope and connection of his writings, how many obscurities there were to be cleared up; and we may be sure that his favoured followers would seek elucidations which he would be ready to furnish. It is necessarily uncertain how far these elucidations coincided with Gnostic ideas; but it is quite certain that they did not coincide with the interpretation

which Protestant divines have put upon his reasonings; for this interpretation is not connected by any links of tradition with the apostolic age. It is deduced from parts only of his writings, and these have been read in the light of contemporary opinion as to the nature of God, and of Christ, and of man. And we can see the precise period at which it was first introduced into the Church, and how it has been subsequently modified.

Another turn may be given to these views of Paul, and it may be suggested that the distinction which he intends to draw is between man as he is by nature, and man as he becomes by grace, when the Spirit of God is imparted to him. In this case, the conflict would be, not between two opposite principles, both belonging to man as a human being, but between the mere human impulses, which are always evil, and the new spiritual impulses arising out of the divine life, of which the believer is made a partaker. And there is an ambiguity in his language which occasionally favours this interpretation. Nevertheless, he appears to recognize that the natural man is not all evil; that in him, though unregenerate, there are impulses tending to God, though too often frustrated of their purpose by the counteracting influence of the flesh; that even Gentiles who had not the Law might do by nature the things contained in the Law, and thus show that they also had such spiritual impulses; and that the office of the Divine Spirit was not to introduce an absolutely new element, but to strengthen and reinforce the spiritual element already existing. So that the contrast which he intends to draw does appear to be between two principles in humanity, and not between humanity as it is by nature, and humanity informed by the Divine Spirit and made a partaker of the Divine life. But whether this be so or not, or whether, as is probable, his views were partially indeterminate, so that he regarded the subject at different times from different standpoints, it is still the case that he draws an absolute distinction between the flesh and the spirit, regarding the one as evil in itself, and the source of all evil, and the other, whether human and divine, or the

human reinforced by the divine, as good, and the cause of all goodness. The dualism, therefore, would still subsist; only in the one case the antagonism would be between the world and the Pneuma, existing as a divine manifestation and independent of the world; and in the other, between flesh and spirit, both parts of the actual world. And, in either case, the sinfulness of the flesh was employed as an argument to prove the worthlessness of the Law.

It is probable, therefore, that the party of the Apostles would be as much repelled by the reasonings employed by Paul as even by his conclusions. And it is probable also that there was a closer connection than we might at first suppose between his writings and teaching, and those half-Gnostic practices which prevailed in the early Church, and which were founded upon the conception of the essentially evil nature of the body. Certainly, his authority was invoked in favour of the ascetic practices of the second and third centuries; in disparagement of marriage and praise of virginity; and in support of the necessity of keeping the body under by a resolute stifling of the strongest and purest natural feelings, long before any one cited them in favour of the doctrine of justification by faith. And these practices, and, it may be presumed, Paul's authority in support of them, may be traced back almost to the time of the Apostles.<sup>1</sup>

Corresponding with the depreciation of the Law, and of man's physical or material nature, there was an elevation of the person and nature of Jesus. Upon this point, however, it is difficult to say to what extent the views of Paul were peculiar to himself, and how far they were shared by the Twelve. That there is a marked difference between the Man Jesus depicted in the first Gospel, and the Lord Christ set forth by Paul, is unquestionable. And if this difference still subsists, although that Gospel has come to us through the orthodox Gentile party—who, before the middle of the second century, had obtained predominance in the

<sup>1</sup> Justin speaks of persons who had kept their virginity for fifty or sixty years, and this would bring us to about the last quarter of the first century.—Apol. cxv.

Church—we can scarcely doubt that it was more strongly marked in the original work of Matthew. But it is an allowable suggestion that this difference was the result of subsequent meditation upon the person, miracles, and work of Jesus, seen in the light of his resurrection and reception into heaven, and of the marvelous spread of the society; and that the older Apostles would be no less influenced by this than was Paul. And though Paul has made this elevation of the nature of Jesus the basis of his doctrine of the abolition of the Law, to which, indeed, it is essential, yet this might be only the purpose for which he employed an opinion common to the whole Church, or held by its leaders. This view is partially confirmed by the language of the Apocalypse, which in reference to Jesus is in many particulars identical with that of Paul. Nevertheless, it would seem that the doctrines of Paul, even in this respect, must have been peculiar, since the difference between the work of Christ, as conceived by the two parties, must, apparently, have corresponded to some difference in his nature. To Paul, Jesus was a substitute for the Law. By his death he had abolished the “handwriting of ordinances,” and had replaced it by a new unwritten spiritual law, which was alone binding on the Church. By descending into the waters of baptism, the neophyte was buried with Christ; by that burial he became also dead to the Law and to sin; and then, by being raised up out of these waters, he entered into a new life of spirituality and freedom. When Christ died, all who were afterwards admitted into the Church died also representatively; and just as his death prefigured their symbolical death in baptism, so his resurrection prefigured their symbolical resurrection when they were lifted up. By thus dying with him, their old relations—to the Law on the one hand, and to false gods on the other, as well as to the sins they had committed in their previous state—were terminated; and the new life upon which they had entered was a life in Christ Jesus, which freed them at once from the bondage of the Law and of sin. It is difficult to suppose that those who regarded the work of Jesus

as fulfilling the Law, and who, in spite of their belief in him as the Messiah, and their having been baptized into his name, were still zealots for the Law, could have regarded him under the same aspect. They invested him, probably, with similar titles and attributes; for they would apply to him whatever language had been employed of the Messiah in the books they accepted; but the words would have to them a different meaning and value. Certainly, they recognized nothing in his nature which implied the worthlessness of the Law, or derogated from the claims of the "jealous" God by whom that Law had been given.

The doctrines taught by Paul almost necessarily involved the rejection of Israel as a nation. And in order to explain and vindicate that rejection, he fell back upon the absolute sovereignty of God, who, knowing all things from the beginning, had predetermined the course of events, and had fixed the destiny of nations and individuals according to His mere arbitrary will, and apart from all considerations of merit or demerit. The most signal instance of this was the choice of Jacob in preference to Esau, whether it was regarded as made before their birth, or after their characters had been displayed; for there must have been many Jews who were fully conscious of the lowering incidents in the life of their progenitor, which, nevertheless, had not prevented him from being the favourite of Jehovah. But then, if Esau had been rejected in spite of his being of the seed of Abraham, and Jacob chosen in spite of his meannesses and frauds, why might not the Jews be rejected in spite of their birth and adherence to the Law, and the Gentiles chosen in spite of their lawlessness? And if the Jews had accepted the benefits which an act of arbitrary choice had conferred, it was not open to them now to complain of the evils which an equally arbitrary act of rejection would involve. The giving of the Law, too, was a sovereign act. There could, consequently, be no reason why it should not be superseded by some new economy. God, who had chosen to make His favour depend upon one set of conditions, might choose to substitute another in its place, without giving



any reason for the change, and men had nothing to do but acquiesce and obey.

It was, apparently, the difficulty created by the obvious fact that the Jews as a people did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah, and refused to enrol themselves among his followers, that led to the elaborate reasoning by which the Apostle attempts to establish his doctrine of election; but the doctrine itself was, no doubt, framed independently. As we have seen, there is a reference to it in his second letter to the Thessalonians, where he speaks of God having from the beginning chosen them to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth.<sup>1</sup> And some such doctrine was inevitable. For Paul could not but feel that the very circumstance of the Gospel being preached to any people, without which they could not believe—for faith must come by hearing—was a matter independent of their choice and quite irrespective of their merit. That, for instance, he had preached to the Thessalonians, was the result of the action of the Spirit, which had twice turned back Silas and himself when they had essayed to direct their labours to another quarter; they had thus been enabled to receive the Gospel by the same act which had deprived others, not less worthy, of the opportunity. And he must have felt, too, that among those who heard the Gospel, it was not always the most deserving by whom it was received. It was not merely that not many wise or prudent or learned were chosen, but that the degraded and the impure, who occasionally carried their irregularities into the assemblies of the faithful, were elected, rather than the chaste, frugal, and well-conducted. Those whose knowledge and virtues would have made them ornaments to the society, too often stood aloof, while the ignorant and the vicious flocked in. And yet these latter, by their profession of a faith in Christ, and by baptism into his name, received the gifts of the Spirit, and became children of God and heirs of the promise. So that he could not but regard the faith of those who received the word, as well as the unbelief

<sup>1</sup> 2 Thess. ii. 13.

of those by whom it was rejected, as the work of God, acting according to the good pleasure of His will.

And it is probable that the belief had deeper roots than these—that it was founded on Paul's own personal consciousness. To what but the free grace of God was his own conversion due? When there were so many of his countrymen who had never persecuted the Church of Christ, but had looked upon it with possibly a kindly interest, how was it that he, the injurious and the persecutor, should have been chosen? He, at least, had done nothing to merit his election, any more than the others to merit their exclusion. No doubt, too, he was conscious of the many defects of temper and of character which still attached to him, and, we may believe, often lamented them; and in some moods he must have recognized the superiority in these respects of men who had not joined the Church. He could, therefore, attribute his present position to nothing but the free choice of God. It was by the grace of God that he was what he was; and it was the same with all whom he had converted—with all, indeed, who had joined the Church. And this grace could only be the result of a self-determined volition, choosing some and rejecting the rest.

It appears inevitable that any one who believes conversion to be the work of the Holy Spirit, and himself to be converted, or whether he believes the latter or not, should also accept the doctrine of election. He cannot but feel that there is no such superiority in himself over some, at least, of those whom he sees not to be converted, as to account for his being selected on the ground of greater desert. And that which he admits for himself, he cannot but feel with regard to other converts. Judged by their conduct before, or it may even be after, their conversion, it is impossible to suppose that, as compared with many who still remain in the world, they could have possessed any merits which entitled them exclusively to the Divine favour. That he and they should have been selected, then, and the others passed over, can only be the

effect of the sovereign will of God alike in the rejection and in the choice. The Spirit inspires<sup>1</sup> where and how it pleases, and no account of its operations can be given from the supernatural standpoint, excepting that so it seems good in its sight. Apart, therefore, from any general considerations as to the position of the Jews in relation to the Church, the very belief that conversion was the result of a divine influence, almost necessarily involved the doctrine of election. And that, taken in connection with the perfect foreknowledge of God, implied predestination also.

While, however, we are able to see that, from the point of view of the Apostle, this doctrine was unquestionable, we can see also that it would fail to convince the Jews, since it left out of consideration the very circumstance upon which they mainly relied. They would admit that their selection was due to the favour of God, irrespective of their own merits, and even, perhaps, irrespective of the merits of their forefathers; and they would also admit that He had been free, and still was free, to show favour to whom He would. But though God possessed this freedom, He had condescended to enter into a covenant with Israel, by which He had bound Himself, and they could not conceive of Him as violating the solemn pledge thus given. In a sense, no doubt, He had the power; but, in their view, "it was impossible that God should lie," and they would refuse to believe any representation that imputed to Him falsehood or change. He had made an everlasting covenant with them. He had established His Law for ever as a rule for their guidance, and they naturally—may we not say rightly?—rejected the invitation to purchase His favour by violating the terms of the compact on their part, and ceasing to render obedience to His Law.

We need not inquire how far the schemes which have been deduced from the writings of Paul by any of the great teachers in the Church, from Augustine downwards, are consistent with justice or benevolence; how far the creation and preservation of a race of sentient and intelligent beings, the vast majority of

<sup>1</sup> τὸ πνεῦμα πνεῖ, John iii. 8.

whom are predestined to endless torment for sins which they could not avoid, or for a sin which they did not commit, or in the mere wantonness of arbitrary will, comports with the idea of a perfectly wise and perfectly good Being; for any such questions were outside of his object. His arguments in the letters we are considering deal entirely with concrete matters existing in the actual state of the Church. The principal of these was the obvious fact, so contrary to all antecedent belief, that the Messiah was rejected by the Jews and accepted by the Gentiles. And this fact had two aspects. If Jesus were the Messiah, then the casting off of the Jews appeared as a contradiction to the prophecies, and a violation of the covenant which Jehovah had made with their fathers. And, conversely, if the prophecies were to be accepted as true, and God were to be regarded as faithful to His promises, then the rejection of Jesus by the Jews might be urged as an argument against his Messiahship. It might, therefore, be argued that the Christians were placed in this dilemma: either God is unfaithful, or Jesus is not the Christ. And it will be seen that Paul deals with both of these questions. He argues, upon various grounds, that Jesus is the Messiah, in spite of the rejection of the Jews; and that God is justified—is not unfaithful—in casting them off on account of this rejection. The wider questions embraced in his reasonings are introduced, not for their own sake, but in order to illustrate and enforce his main argument. In writing his letter to the Romans, Paul was not concerned to lay down a scheme of Christian doctrine. His object was only to vindicate to the Church his own practice and teaching in relation to the Law, and to show, firstly, that God had provided a means to supplement the defects of the Law; and, secondly, that the admission of Gentiles, who even then threatened to monopolize the privileges of the kingdom, did not impeach either the faithfulness of God or the Messiahship of Jesus. With him, however, as we see in almost all his letters, it was impossible to touch upon any subject without some discussion of the general principles involved; and thus that which

was only an occasional composition, intended to deal with a particular question, has become the main basis of Protestant theology.

In connection with these more immediate objects, there was also the necessity of showing some ground for the forgiveness of sins, and for the acceptance of the believer by God. The Law provided, or professed to provide, such a ground; and if it were needful in the case of the Jew, much more might it seem to be required in the case of Gentiles polluted by such sins as the Apostle describes. Obedience to the Law was obviously inadequate, for there was no congruity between the means and the end; outward acts could not avail to purify the soul. And Paul could not rely upon the mercy of God alone. He did not regard God as a Father who, on seeing the return of His repentant child even a long way off, would go forward to meet and welcome him. There must be some ransom; some compensation; some sufficient basis for the acceptance of those who had contaminated themselves; some means by which man might be enabled to reach God. According to his view, matter could not enter heaven; the physical body of the believer was to be exchanged for, or developed into, a new spiritual body, before he could be admitted to share its enjoyments. And as this change was not the result of any capacity inherent in man's nature, but required the intervention of God, or of some divine power, a motive must be supplied for this intervention. Flesh and blood could not inherit the kingdom of God; they were essentially parts of the existing economy, which was to be terminated at the coming of Jesus. They were to be left behind whenever the believer should be called to meet Christ in the air. Corruptible and perishing, they could have no part in a kingdom that was incorruptible and eternal; and, therefore, when Christ was revealed, the living saints would be transformed, and the dead raised in a spiritual body, superior to corruption or decay. And the ransom, or compensation, was found in the humiliation, death, and resurrection of Jesus.



So far as we are able to gather from his writings, Paul did not realize the conception of spirit independent of body—at least in the case of man—any more than of the inevitable connection of act and consequence. He does not appear to have attributed any inherent immortality to man, nor did he suppose that the blessedness of those who believed in Jesus, any more than the sufferings of his enemies, would be the natural result of their condition in this life. Both would be the act of Jesus himself in his character of the Anointed of Jehovah. He at his appearing would reward his followers, and avenge himself upon his foes—taking the one to live with himself, and presumably annihilating the others. To have held that the joys of the redeemed flowed by way of natural consequence from their acts or their state, would have been to contradict his fundamental principle; for then the reward would have been, not of grace, but of law. And the same was apparently the case with the unredeemed. They would not be left to bear the mere consequences of their guilt; they would suffer punishment; and this would not be the natural result of their offences, but something superadded. There are, indeed, many passages inconsistent with this view; as, e.g., when Paul says that what a man soweth, that shall he also reap; and when he speaks of God as rendering to every man according to the deeds done in the body. Both of these—and there are other similar phrases—imply that the future state of the believer and of the unbeliever would depend, not upon faith, but upon conduct, and therefore would be of law, and not of arbitrary favour or rejection. And it is not impossible that there was another side to his doctrines than that which appears upon the surface of his letters, which we are unable to seize because it had no relation to the subjects of controversy, and on that account needed not to be exhibited in his writings. It may even be that the other was the really important side—that aspect of truth upon which he specially dwelt in his preaching; so that the report of his speeches in the Acts might in this respect truly represent his habitual topics of discourse. Certainly, he never

misses an opportunity of enforcing the greater commandments of the Law, and never speaks in disparagement of their claims upon the believer. Nevertheless, we are compelled to leave these out of consideration; for we can only judge of the nature of his teaching by his own exposition of his doctrines.

It is quite possible that Paul confined the vengeance of Jesus to those who had resisted his cause or persecuted his followers; and that all others would be allowed to remain in their graves, not being raised for the purpose of reward or of punishment. And, as we have said, he looked forward to the ultimate restoration, or, it may be suggested, annihilation, of those who might be raised in order to be punished. Nothing whatever in his writings suggests the idea that he believed evil and suffering to be as eternal in their nature as God himself; still less that he believed that the just Judge and merciful Father of mankind miraculously maintained a place of punishment for the never-ending torment of every one of those who, from whatever cause, had fallen short of His favour. Had such a doctrine been put before him, he would have recoiled from it, and would have repudiated the notion that it was involved in his teaching; for he was not a man to be bound by logical fetters, or to follow his reasonings to conclusions that conflicted with the deepest instincts of his nature. For consider, he believed and taught that Christ was to re-appear in his life-time. It is true that he had no conception of the many hundred millions outside of the narrow limits within which his views were confined; yet, even within those limits, he knew that probably not one in ten would have even an opportunity of hearing of the name of Jesus, and that not one in a thousand would accept the invitations of the Gospel. And of those who rejected the invitation, the majority would go, one to his farm, and another to his merchandize, and only an insignificant minority would ill-treat the messengers of the word, and thus show their enmity to that Jesus whom they preached. He could not, therefore, have held a belief which would consign nearly the whole world, Gentile as well as Jewish,

to hopeless and unmitigated torture—to torture, indeed, endless in its duration, and therefore ever increasing in its intensity. And he was not trammelled by the supposed authority of an infallible Scripture. None of the writings upon which the orthodox doctrines on this subject are based were then existing; and if they had been, he would have regarded them no more than he did the prescriptions of James. He had shaken off the yoke of the letter, though he had not been able altogether to free himself from the influence of the modes of thought in which he had been trained, or to rise above some limiting conceptions; which, however, affected rather the form than the substance of his speculations. His fundamental idea was, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself—rendering justice to all men—but so dealing with their offences as ultimately to triumph over sin and death. He would have accepted the formula, that God hates sin but loves the sinner; but he would not have drawn from this the modern orthodox conclusion, that God practically exhibits the very opposite sentiments; proving His love for sin by constituting a world in which it is to subsist and flourish eternally, and His hatred for the sinner by keeping him alive for ever in that world.

Nor can he be held in any way responsible for the consequences that have been deduced from his writings, for he never could have contemplated that they would be employed for such a purpose. He was writing for a temporary object and in view of direct practical issues, and he neither measured his language nor weighed his arguments by the standard of the ultimate needs of the Church. These possibly could not have been within his view; for he believed that the final consummation was at hand. It was not needful for him, therefore, even if it had been consistent with his character, to guard his statements against the misconceptions that might arise if they were taken absolutely, and not in reference to the question under discussion. We cannot, of course, say to what extent he would have accepted the views afterwards formulated by Augustine and Calvin. Probably,

he would have refused to dogmatize upon such matters; for he could not, as they did, start from his own human and imperfect expositions of the truth as it then appeared to him, as an infallible basis upon which to erect a superstructure of dogma. Whatever opinions he might ultimately have adopted, had he been engaged in the same controversies as they, those controversies were not dreamt of at the time; and it is, therefore, unjust to charge him with inferences that have been drawn from language which he employed in another connection and for another purpose.

The problems with which we have to do are the same now as they were in the time of Paul, but they are presented under new conditions. The being of God and the nature of man, the origin of evil, the immortality of the soul, the future life,—present questions which need an answer now as they did when he wrote; but the form of the questions and the materials for their solution have changed. We cannot conceive of God under the same relations that Paul did; for much that he attributed to the direct action of the Deity, we see to be the result of the constitution of nature. We see that evil was not introduced into the world by the sin of Adam; for the acts which we regard as sins in human beings were performed by animals from their first appearance on the earth, and were, in short, the very condition of their existence and perpetuation. We cannot regard death as the result of sin, for it existed for myriads of ages before the appearance of man, and it is a necessary consequence of animal organization. And, above all, we cannot conceive of God as limiting Himself by any scheme of salvation, or by covenants with particular nations and individuals, especially such as those described in the Bible—the one with Abraham, and the other with those who believe and are baptized into the name of Jesus. Such a limitation is inconsistent with the attributes which we must assume to belong to Him, and brings Him down to the level of earthly rulers, who exhibit partiality, and whom it is necessary to bind by oaths and compacts. It is also equally inconsistent with the observed

course of events in the modern, no less than in the ancient world.

Such a conception was natural, and, we may say, inevitable, to a Jew who knew nothing of the races of mankind, or of their history, excepting from the sacred writings of his people, and from his own narrow observation; for to him the whole ancient world was included in the few peoples who were brought into contact with Israel, and the modern world by the countries bordering the Mediterranean. Yet at the time that Paul wrote, the earth was probably as populous as it is now. There has been, no doubt, a marked increase in the population of the north of Europe; but it is possible that this has been balanced by the desolation of many of the regions that were most flourishing at that time. Even in America, the European race is, we may believe, less numerous than the native races who have been destroyed. And there seems no reason to doubt that it was equally populous in the time of Abraham. At that epoch, Egypt was in the height of its glory, inheriting a civilization of many centuries; and its priests even then taught the immortality of the soul and a state of future retribution. The plains of Mesopotamia were the seat of a numerous, industrious, and thriving population, to whom we owe, apparently, some of the most important elements of modern civilization; and whose progress in science and the arts is attested by the still surviving ruins of the cities they erected, and by the works they executed to restrain and utilize the waters of the great rivers of their country. Tyre was trading with Spain, and probably with Britain, on the one hand, and with India, by way of Tadmor and the Persian Gulf, on the other. The Eastern shores of the Mediterranean were studded with cities, and the same was doubtless the case with Italy and Spain. The Empire of China existed, and Brahmanism was the established religion of India; while Africa and America were fully peopled, and had been so for unnumbered generations. How, then, are we to suppose that the Father of mankind, of whom all nations were the offspring;



or the just Ruler of the world, should have confined His favour at first to one family, and afterwards to one people, revealing Himself to them, and leaving all the rest of mankind in ignorance and darkness? If now we feel it difficult to suppose that Christians have a monopoly of the Divine regard when they are numbered by millions, much more must we feel it when for so many years it was monopolized, not by a single family even, but by selected individuals of that family; and afterwards for many centuries confined to a portion of the inhabitants of so insignificant a country as Palestine.

In the case, too, both of the Jews and the Christians, the supposed exclusive favour fails to exhibit itself in the manner we should have a right to expect. It is not merely that, where all men are alike the offspring and workmanship of God, the selection of a few and the rejection of the vast majority is inconsistent with this relation—but that, judged by their personal behaviour and by their treatment of others, those who are selected show no such superiority as to vindicate their assumed character. And, further, there is nothing in the observed course of events to answer to such a choice. Not only does the sun shine upon the orthodox and the heretic, and the rain fall upon the Christian and the heathen, but both are treated alike in all respects, so far as their life is open to our inspection. The believer who is idle or negligent pays the penalty of his indolence and carelessness in the same manner as the unbeliever, and the unbeliever equally with the believer reaps the reward of prudence and industry. The same rule prevails with regard to states. Their prosperity depends in no degree upon their faith, unless in so far as that may foster the qualities with which success is connected. The history of Israel, for instance, exhibits the same alternations of fortune as that of all the surrounding nations—peace and order, with their concomitants, wealth and progress, under the reign of prudent or fortunate princes; and wars and invasions followed by famine and pestilence, when their rulers were aggressive and unfortunate. The miraculous interpositions which

their histories record may effect a momentary diversion in their favour; but it is only momentary. They stand, apparently, on the same level with their neighbours of Moab, Edom, and Syria, with one or other of whom they are almost perpetually at feud, but over none of which do they obtain any permanent superiority. And, with them, they are ultimately absorbed in the great Eastern Empire; never again, excepting during the brief Maccabean period, possessing any independence.

Not merely this, but the epoch of their greatest prosperity was when they were prone to idolatry, and turned aside on every occasion to adore the gods of the surrounding nations, or of their Canaanitish predecessors. When under David, they not only worshipped upon all the high places throughout the land, but offered human sacrifices to Jehovah himself; and under Solomon, added to this worship that of Ashtoreth and Milcom. The building of the Temple, and its solemn dedication to Jehovah, broke the power of the nation by alienating the northern tribes, and thus dividing it into two separate and hostile monarchies. The destruction of the high places by Hezekiah was followed by the invasion of the Assyrians, who ravaged the whole country, and compelled him to purchase an ignominious peace by the sacrifice of the sacred treasures of the Temple. The reforms of Josiah were the almost immediate prelude to the fall of the kingdom of Judah; his children reigning only as the vassals of Egypt or Chaldea. During the captivity, the Jews learned to worship Jehovah exclusively, and to keep the Law; but their independence was not restored to them, nor was the throne of David re-established. And during the whole period that intervened between the captivity and the destruction of Jerusalem, their condition was so far from being in any respect superior to that of the neighboring nations, that their struggles to maintain unimpaired the purity of their worship brought upon them disasters from which the others were free.

The preaching of Christianity has introduced no new principle into the government of the world, either as regards indivi-

duals or nations. If the triumph of the Christian religion is not to be held responsible for the corruption and decay of the Roman Empire, at least it did nothing to remove the causes to which they were due, or to arrest their progress. The true faith was gradually disentangled from the errors with which it had been entwined; the nature of Christ and his relation to the Father and the Spirit were correctly defined; and heretics were suppressed or converted. But these triumphs of orthodoxy were accompanied by a corresponding decay in the courage and discipline of the soldiers and in the patriotism of the citizens. So that when the barbarians came to exact vengeance for all that they had suffered at the hands of the Empire, there was little to oppose to them but the relics of saints and martyrs; and these proved but an insufficient defence. The fall of Jerusalem is habitually adduced as a signal instance of Divine retribution, punishing the Jews for having rejected Christ. But if this were so, then, by a parity of reason, the fall of the Roman Empire after it had become Christian and orthodox should be regarded as a punishment for having accepted him. For at least it must be admitted as a proof that God continues to annex the prosperity of individuals and the independence of states to the mere human virtues of courage, industry, self-restraint, wisdom and foresight; reserving for orthodoxy, it may be, the rewards of the next world, but leaving it unrecompensed in the present.

Are we, however, to believe that there is this fatal opposition between the world and God—this mockery of man by the very plan upon which the world is framed? Are all those actions which bring with them health of body and peace of mind—which alleviate suffering and diminish crime, and thus tend to augment the well-being of the performer and of those around him—evil in themselves? And do they only become good if performed with a conscious reference to the Divine command, or by a regenerate man? Men in the present life are encouraged to pursue virtue—to practise self-restraint—to be chaste, frugal, just, and self-sacrificing—because such conduct brings with it

the outward rewards of success and reputation, and the inward rewards of a good conscience. Are they to find in the future life that these rewards are illusory, and that, in spite of all, they are still the objects of eternal wrath? Is the life of the anchorite, who severs himself from human charities and human duties in order that he may escape, not temptation or desire—for he is still subject to these, often in their fiercest forms—but the opportunity of yielding to their seductions, really more acceptable to the Ruler of the world than that of the head of a household wisely and lovingly training his children in habits of virtue, or of the citizen who sacrifices his own welfare for the safety or advancement of the state? Paul, from his standpoint, would, no doubt, have put aside all such questions; for, in view of the immediate coming of Christ, arguments founded upon the course and order of the world had no meaning. The world itself was doomed to almost instant destruction, and all that remained was to seek in the Church a refuge from the universal wreck. Whilst only those who were chosen by God to be hearers of the Gospel could do this.

These questions, however, still press upon us. But our difficulty is not, that we consider God is unjust in giving advantages to some which are denied to others, for that appears inevitable; it is, that the entire course of events is inconsistent with the idea of any such selection of individuals or nations as the exclusive objects of His favour, as Paul teaches. Tried by whatever test we can apply, there is precisely the same mode of dealing with the persons supposed to be selected, as with those who are rejected. There is the same mingling of good and evil in conduct and in character, and in fortune also—the same connection between merit and success, and between defect and failure—the same liability to sorrow and bereavement—the same alleviations in the influence of time and circumstance—and death, as the same kindly refuge to all, at the end. And the same is the case with regard to the assumed superiority of the ascetic virtues, or what are called such, over the social. Whenever the ascetic rule

prevails, and men are taught to seek perfection in practices which run counter to the essential needs of our organization, it is always found that outraged Nature contrives to avenge herself. The few may be able to maintain themselves permanently above their bodily needs, but the many will habitually fall below the ordinary level of morality, and will indemnify themselves for their enforced abstinences by lapses into vices which we must be satisfied to leave undescribed. And if it be said that believers are cheered and strengthened by the certain hope of immortality, that is the case equally with the believers in Mary, or Mahomet, or Confucius, or Buddha, or Brahma.

The doctrines held and promulgated by Paul were relative to his age and position. To him they appeared liberal and universal; for he had no idea of the countless millions by whom the earth was peopled, or of the many ages that were to elapse before the consummation of all things. His views were bounded by the existing generation, and by that part of the world with which his own travels, and his talk with his more travelled countrymen, had made him acquainted. We have no right, therefore, to attribute to him the idea, that for eighteen centuries after his death the knowledge necessary to salvation should be confined to so small a fraction of the family of man. But while thus exonerating him, we only the more strongly condemn those who, possessing the knowledge which he lacked, still remain within the narrow circle of ideas that he traced. For no more fatal blow could be given to our conception of God as a just and benevolent Being, than to teach that He has purposely excluded the vast majority of mankind from a knowledge of the truth, and that He will, because of this exclusion, punish them in hell for ever.



## CHAPTER XI.

### FROM GREECE TO ROME.

Necessity of journey to Jerusalem—Fears with which it was undertaken—Circumstances that might encourage hope of favourable result—Compelled change of plan—Probably part of efforts to prevent his journey to Jerusalem repeated during the voyage—Incompleteness of history due to intentional suppression of incidents—Paul meets the rest of his party at Philippi—Remains to keep Passover—Troas—Meeting of brethren on Saturday evening—Eutychus—Stunned, but not dead—Paul despatches his party and departs himself on Sunday morning—Passes Ephesus, probably to avoid enemies—Summons elders from Ephesus to Miletus—Speech answers to standpoint of writer, not of Paul—Arrival at Cæsarea—Mission of Agabus—Intended to arrange terms of reception—Necessity of such arrangement—Feelings of brethren at Jerusalem and of Jews—Terms of arrangement—Previous concession to Gentiles ratified—Arrival at Jerusalem—Received by James and elders at formal meeting—No private interview—Demand made upon Paul, and his acquiescence—Inconsistent with principles—The necessary price of reconciliation—Paul's desire for peace—His position had become intolerable—Nazarite vow—Tumult in temple—Rescue of Paul—Improbability of subsequent story—Tenor of narrative shows that Paul must have been under charge when rescued, or shortly afterwards—Description of scene before Sanhedrim—Conspiracy of Jews—Conformable to Divine Law, as they received it—Paul sent to Felix with letter—Comments on letter—Arrival of high-priest—Hearing before Felix, who neither sends Paul back nor brings him to trial, but frees him from bonds—Such favours must have been purchased—Felix would not release Paul, or not without heavy bribe—On recall, Felix replaces Paul in bonds—Arrival of Festus—Conduct of high-priest shows that he was aggrieved by refusal to bring Paul to trial—Festus investigates charge—Decides, apparently, either that Paul was guilty, or that the Sanhedrim had jurisdiction—Paul appeals to the Emperor—Festus keeps him in bonds—Improbability of interview with Agrippa—Speech contradicts Paul's own statements in his letters—Impossibility that Festus could have held a sitting as described—Circumstances of Paul while a prisoner at Cæsarea—Apparently, no letters then written preserved, though probably some written—Sent a prisoner to Rome, and after narrowly escaping death by shipwreck, arrives there.

THE three months' stay in Greece terminates the first, and possibly the only, period of independent activity in the life of Paul. He had left Antioch after the dispute with Peter, appa-

rently alone, and he had taught in his own name and upon his own sole authority. His personal teaching was, seemingly, confined to Ephesus and the immediate vicinity; but from this centre he had maintained his position against his assailants, partly by his letters, and partly by the few friends who adhered to him, and whom he employed as delegates to the churches he was unable to visit. Of the letters written during this period, four have been preserved; but it is natural to suppose that there must have been many others;<sup>1</sup> for he would not leave any church without some words of warning or guidance, nor (probably) send a messenger who was not accredited by some writing from himself. But, in spite of every exertion, he had been made to feel that the contest was hopeless, and that his single efforts, though they might retard, could not prevent, the triumph of his opponents. Hence his resolution to visit Jerusalem; a resolution formed, probably, with much reluctance and after many hesitations, and, certainly, with abundant forebodings of an unfavourable result; but apparently recognized as inevitable.

That Paul, under the circumstances, should have decided upon such a journey, may well excite surprise; since even if we could suppose, with orthodox commentators, that the Apostles had no share in the measures directed against him, that would only render more inexcusable the language in which he had referred to them in his letter to the Galatians; which must have been communicated to the church in Jerusalem. We may be certain that if he could employ such language in the comparative calm of dictating a letter, he would yet be more vehement and outspoken in his actual controversies. Read his description of the exercise of the gift of tongues, and then conceive of his thanking God that he could speak with tongues more than they all! Such a man would be so possessed by his feelings of ecstasy

<sup>1</sup> We may be almost certain that there were at least two such: one to the Corinthians, referred to in our first; and one to the Galatians, giving directions for the mode of making the collection. It is difficult to suppose that in writing to the Corinthians he could be referring to oral instructions given more than two years previously, and the existing letter to the Galatians contains no hint on the subject.

or of anger, as to be utterly incapable of restraining their expression, or of measuring the language in which he gave them utterance. These utterances would be caught up and preserved, and repeated, probably, in an exaggerated form, to the men against whom they were directed. Paul might be willing to forget; for his appears to have been one of those fiery, impulsive natures whose anger often exhales with its fierce momentary expression; but those who had been the subjects of his epigrams and sarcasm would remember only too well. How, then, could he expect to be received as a friend and brother by those whose office he had contemned and whose policy he had thwarted? How was he to explain his language, or excuse or justify his conduct? And, above all, how could he expect to obtain the sanction of the "thousands" of brethren, "zealots for the Law," to a system which implied that the Law was effete and abrogated; or, worse, that it was a burthen and a snare; imposing obligations which it was beyond the power of man to fulfil in all their strictness, and mocking him with the promise of safety on condition of this impossible fulfilment? Shortly before starting on his journey, he had despatched an elaborate manifesto in defence of his views, the Epistle to the Romans, in which the impotency of the Law, and, therefore, the injury it had inflicted upon those to whom it was given, was exhibited in a striking form; and this, even if confined to the church at Rome, must surely have been known, at least as a rumour, by his opponents as well as by his followers. Being known, it could scarcely fail to add to the difficulties of his position.

The task, therefore, was one from which he might well shrink; and yet, if it were not attempted, there was no prospect before him but of seeing the fruits of his labours appropriated by his enemies, and himself practically excommunicated. His connection with the church at Antioch was permanently severed; his old friends and colleagues, Barnabas and Silas, were separated from him; in Galatia and in Corinth, where he had been the first to preach the Gospel, we learn from himself that his oppo-

nents had penetrated, and had at least divided the churches; and we can have no doubt that the same had been the case in Macedonia and Ephesus. Thus not only his cause, but his life, would be imperilled if the quarrel were not adjusted. Deep as was the hostility of the Jews, it may be a question whether that of the brethren was not greater; for a false brother is more odious than an open foe; and as such he was, and must continue to be regarded, unless he could convince the Apostles, not, perhaps, of the soundness of his views, but of their suitability to the field in which he laboured; or, at least, of the expediency of allowing them to be propagated in view of their results; or, if even that were impossible, could arrive at some compromise which might permit them again to recognize him as a brother. Difficult as the task might be, there were many reasons why it should not be regarded as hopeless; for we may believe that the victory of the party of the Apostles was neither complete nor secure. In Galatia there had been a reaction in his favour, as we see by the directions he had given with regard to the contributions for Jerusalem. In Corinth, too, there must have been a party which adhered to him, and who preserved his Epistles. He had been driven from Ephesus, and did not venture to land there on his journey; but a deputation from the brethren of that place met him at Miletus; and we see from the Revelations that his adherents in the churches of Asia were still numerous. It was impossible, therefore, to foresee the complications that might arise, and the injury that might be done to the cause, unless an arrangement were effected. There were, consequently, strong motives, which the leaders of the Church might be expected to appreciate, to assent to some compromise; for they must feel that the difficulties of preaching to the Gentiles would be greatly enhanced if two different Gospels were presented to their acceptance by hostile parties, each claiming apostolical authority. And Paul, who had already on a former visit to Jerusalem obtained recognition, in spite of the anger produced by the introduction of Titus, might well hope that, if once admitted to a hearing, his

arguments, backed by the large contributions he had brought, and probably by the concessions he was prepared to make, would enable him to obtain favourable terms for himself and his doctrines. We are bound also to believe that he had full faith in his claim to have received these doctrines by direct Divine revelation, and that he would, consequently, rely upon the help of the Spirit, both to give fit words to himself, and to carry conviction to the minds of his hearers.

Notwithstanding all this, however, we see with what anxiety he looked forward to his journey, and how much he feared the result. In his letter to the Romans he asks their prayers, that his offerings may be accepted of the saints; and during his whole course, his own anticipations concur with the warnings he receives, that danger and imprisonment, and perhaps even death, awaited him. But he felt that the visit to Jerusalem was necessary to his cause, and he had too often confronted hostility in all its various forms to recede before it now. He was willing again, as often before, to risk everything, not counting his life dear to him if so he might secure the triumph of the truth; or, failing this, might put a stop to the dissensions that were rending the body of the Church. He did not disguise from himself or from his friends the difficulty and dangers of the task; but he realized, what they did not, that it was inevitable. It was a forlorn hope; but many a cause as desperate had been won; and if he fell, his body might form a bridge over which others might pass to the results he had failed to obtain.

With these feelings he started on his journey. At the beginning it was needful to change his original purpose of proceeding direct from Greece to Syria, in order to escape some plot against his life, which the writer of the Acts attributes to the Jews. As, however, the letters of Paul at this time are silent as to any opposition without the Church, and disclose vehement animosities within, and as his visit to Greece—especially if he had carried out his purpose of proceeding to Corinth—could not fail to embitter these animosities, while the writer of the Acts uni-



formly suppresses all mention of quarrels within the Church itself, we are entitled, if not compelled, to conclude that the measures to prevent or delay his journey to Jerusalem were taken by the delegates from that place, or at their instance. Probably, indeed, they formed the first of the efforts that we see were repeated at intervals throughout his journey, to induce him to abandon his purpose. In this case, however, as in others, they failed, though he was compelled to alter his intended route and go by way of Macedonia.

Such, at least, is the statement in the Acts, that, as referring to a period upon which the supposed author may be taken to be especially well informed, since he joined Paul almost immediately afterwards, we should be disposed to follow. And yet, as the narrative implies that the deputies who accompanied him into Asia joined him in Macedonia,<sup>1</sup> and as we can scarcely suppose that he had ever intended to perform his journey without them, there are difficulties in the way of accepting it. Probably the real facts may have been that Paul, who, it appears, meant to reach Jerusalem shortly before Pentecost, had left instructions for these delegates to join him at Corinth in time for the journey, and that when his stay in Greece was cut short, and he was compelled to alter his contemplated route, they were directed to rendezvous in Philippi. Considering the uncertainty of his position, he would scarcely deem it prudent to take with him a numerous party of strangers from other churches, though he might propose that they should join him at Corinth if his reception were favourable. But when he found himself unable to remain, or when plots against his life necessitated a change of

<sup>1</sup> Acts xx. 4. The phrase, "and there accompanied him into Asia," &c., may undoubtedly be understood as though some of those who had been his companions up to that time had then left the party, and the writer enumerated those who remained; but the more natural explanation is, that it is intended to describe their joining Paul at this place, since it is not probable that he should have visited Greece for a prolonged stay with so large a party as the former interpretation would imply. And it would be singular to speak of those who are named as though they had only accompanied him into Asia, if in truth they had been his companions for three months previously.

plan, he had no alternative but to return to Macedonia for the purpose of meeting them.

This is one of the portions of the Acts in which we must assume the intentional suppression of facts well known to the writer, whether we suppose him to have been the companion who joined Paul, presumably at Philippi, where he had been left five years before, or some later compiler. If the former, he must have heard from the mouth of Paul himself all that had occurred during his visit to Greece: the motives of his journey—his companions—the places he visited—his reception—the conflicts in which he was engaged—and the result, whether favourable to himself or the reverse. It is impossible that a narrative of these events, supplementing as it would the scanty hints which Paul has given in his letters, could have been devoid of importance and interest. Its omission cannot, therefore, be attributed to any other cause than that it would reflect discredit upon the Church or upon Paul, probably upon both; for in such contests, whoever may be right in theory, both parties almost inevitably place themselves in the wrong by their conduct. The author must have well known the existence of those “fightings without and fears within” that had beset the path of the Apostle when he entered into Macedonia, for he was almost certainly in his company at the time; but all he says is, that “he went over those parts, giving much exhortation.” He must have known, too, not only Paul’s anxieties with regard to the church of Corinth—his fears and hesitations, alternating with outbursts of confidence in himself and in his cause—but also in what manner they were terminated; whether by the triumphant vindication of his authority, or by the victory of his opponents, or by permanent dissension in the Church; or whether he shrank from the encounter; but all he says is, that “he came into Greece and abode there three months.” And if the latter, it is impossible to suppose that the companion of Paul, whose journal he has partly copied, who was writing for himself or for his friends, and who preserved so careful a record of other parts of his journeyings,

should have omitted to record the incidents of this eventful period, or that this record would not have been equally available to the writer with those which he has employed. But then this suppression of facts, the disclosure of which would have marred the picture of harmony that his narrative suggests, necessarily throws a doubt over the whole, and entitles us to believe that the hostility which compelled Paul to change his purposed course to Jerusalem arose from another quarter than that suggested, and assumed a different form.

However this may be, Paul appears to have returned from Greece alone, and to have organized his party at Philippi. He himself, we are told, still paid so much respect to the customs of his people, as not to voyage during the days of unleavened bread. He, accordingly, sent forward his companions, while he remained behind to keep the Passover, together with the writer of the journal, a portion of which is here introduced, and who, presumably, was a proselyte of righteousness.<sup>1</sup> We are ignorant of the motives that induced Paul to remain at Philippi for this purpose; for the circumstance that there was no synagogue in the place, shows that there could not have been any settlement of Jews there. It may be, however, that this was the reason, since thus he would be spared from the risk of collision with them. When the time had expired, he sailed for Troas, which place he reached after a tedious voyage of five days; and here, notwithstanding his intention, if possible, to reach Jerusalem before Pentecost, he stayed for a week. On the occasion of his last visit, his anxieties with regard to the church of Corinth, and their reception of his letter, had been too great to permit him to remain, although he had felt that a favourable opening was offered to him; and he was now anxious to atone for his abrupt departure by a prolonged stay. It appears that a church existed at the place; and though

<sup>1</sup> This is, apparently, implied in his remaining with Paul at Philippi; and in Acts xxi. 29, where the reference to Trophimus only, though the writer certainly, and probably all others of the party, must have been seen with Paul, suggests that the objection applied to him alone.

we are ignorant by whom or when it was founded, we may conjecture that it was by one of his followers. Presumably, the whole period of his stay was occupied in teaching and confirming the brethren; and on the evening of the first day of the week, that being the day upon which he had fixed for his departure, the disciples met for the purpose of celebrating the Lord's Supper, and of receiving Paul's final farewell; for to him there was "no more place in those parts," and he was about to quit them for ever. The meeting took place on, as we should term it, the Saturday evening, just after the termination of the Jewish Sabbath; for Paul and all the early disciples adopted the Jewish mode of reckoning, which made the day commence and terminate at sunset. With the beginning of the first day, they were assembled, and Paul, inspired by the occasion, discoursed among them at unusual length, and probably with unusual fervour. During the discourse, an incident occurred which the simple faith of the writer has transmitted to us as a stupendous miracle, but which we may assume to have been a wonderful escape from death, rather than a miraculous resurrection from the dead. A youth, overcome with weariness, slept, and falling out of the window in which he was seated, was taken up senseless and, apparently, lifeless. Paul, we are told, "fell upon him and embraced him," and then assured the bystanders that he was still alive, and their cares ultimately succeeded in restoring animation. After this, Paul continued conversing and exhorting till dawn; and then, breaking bread and eating,<sup>1</sup> the party separated on the Sunday morning, when Paul's companions departed to Assos by sea, presumably in the same ship that had brought him from Macedonia; Paul himself proceeding thither on foot.

From Assos the party proceeded to Miletus, passing by

<sup>1</sup> Implying, apparently, a meal; but this would be inconsistent with the language of Paul in the first Epistle to the Corinthians (xi. 22): "What! have ye not houses to eat and drink in?"

Ephesus, ostensibly to escape the delay of touching there, but we may conjecture rather from a natural desire to avoid the risk of rekindling the hostility which had only a few months previously driven him from that city at peril of his life; for it is difficult to suppose that putting in at Ephesus, which would have rendered it unnecessary to touch at Miletus, could have occupied so long a time as sending from the latter place to summon the elders of the church at Ephesus, and awaiting their arrival. The distance between the two places by the road was from twenty-five to thirty miles, and the way was rough and difficult. Less than four days would scarcely suffice for the despatch of the messenger, his journey to Ephesus, the gathering together of the elders, the preparations for their departure, and their arrival at Miletus. A single man might easily proceed from one post to the other in a day, though it would be a fatiguing journey, as the road crossed a steep range of hills; but the summoning of the separate elders, and their arrangements for starting, would be a work of time; for promptitude in such matters is not an oriental characteristic; and a party, probably comprising men of advanced age, might occupy more than a day in the transit.

Obedient to his summons, the elders of the church of Ephesus, which Paul had founded, arrived at Miletus. The scene as depicted in the Acts is too well known to need any detailed repetition. He addressed them, recapitulating his labours and services, vindicating his teaching and conduct, and attributing all his past sufferings to the "laying in wait" of the Jews; but warning them for the future, not against Jews, but against "grievous wolves" entering the Church, and men "speaking perverse things to draw away disciples," who should arise from among themselves. He refers to his journey to Jerusalem in terms full of a mournful foreboding, but expresses his determination to encounter all risks rather than recede from his purpose; and he warns his hearers that their present separation is to be



final; that they shall see his face no more. And having finished his address, he embraces his friends and departs, followed by their tears and regrets.<sup>1</sup>

Although, doubtless, the scene is historical, the speech certainly is not. It belongs to the same class as those of Peter<sup>2</sup> and Stephen, and of Paul himself at Antioch, and Lystra, and Athens, when the writer, whoever he may be, certainly was not present. If recorded at the time, it has been re-modelled, to make it harmonize with the picture of the condition of the Church drawn in the Acts; but, probably, the author had before him only the scene and the actors, and framed a speech in accordance with what appeared to him suitable. In the letters written by Paul while at Ephesus, and immediately after his having been driven forth from that place, there is no reference whatever to the Jews, nor any hint of hostility on their part; and there can be no ground for supposing that he would have hesitated to mention them had they really been the enemies whose ceaseless animosity he had experienced. And though the "boasting" with regard to his own humility, labours, disinterestedness, sincerity in preaching the Gospel, and completeness of doctrine, are of a piece with his similar boastings in his various Epistles, and are, therefore, substantially such as might be expected from him on the occasion, we should expect them to be accompanied by warnings against specific errors, and by some statement of the truths to which his listeners were to adhere. Least of all would he have adopted the fatalistic tone attributed to him, and have spoken as though there were nothing to be done but acquiesce in the inevitable evils which he foresaw, instead of urging upon them the necessity of watchfulness, prayer, and ceaseless effort, to encounter and repel the deceivers and their doctrines. The writer, who probably had seen the

<sup>1</sup> How completely it destroys the solemnity and pathos of this scene to assume, with orthodox writers, that Paul subsequently revisited Ephesus in security and comfort!

<sup>2</sup> Comp. "I have coveted no man's silver or gold" (Acts xx. 33), with "Silver and gold have I none" (iii. 6). Paul never employs such a phrase in his writings.

almost complete triumph of the party opposed to Paul, and the defection of many leading men among his adherents, carrying away with them a large body of followers, might naturally put such language into his mouth; but unless the spirit of the Apostle had been completely cowed by the prospect of the troubles which awaited him at Jerusalem, his own language would have been very different.

Leaving Miletus, Paul proceeded on his journey, almost everywhere meeting with warnings intended to dissuade him from proceeding to Jerusalem, until he at length arrived at Cæsarea. Here, we are told, the party found shelter in the house of Philip the Evangelist, the same person to whom we have seen the author attribute so conspicuous a position immediately after the first dispersion. And in a work written for a purpose, as the Acts is, it is difficult not to suspect that the introduction of his name here is due rather to the objects of the writer than to his having really performed the part assigned to him. When so much that did occur is omitted with the view of concealing dissensions, we may reasonably suspect that something that did not occur may have been introduced in order to suggest friendship and concert. At Cæsarea, almost in sight of the Holy City, Paul stopped for some days; and here he was visited by Agabus, an influential member of the church at Jerusalem, whom he had formerly known at Antioch. The delay and the embassy had doubtless the same object—that of adjusting the terms upon which he should, not, indeed, visit Jerusalem, for that the Church could not hinder, but be received by James and the elders as a brother; and some such arrangement was obviously needed.

The forebodings which we see were entertained by Paul and his friends, are in some degree a measure of the repugnance with which his arrival was expected by his enemies, and of the anxiety it must have caused to his well-wishers in Jerusalem; for it could not but be embarrassing and, perhaps, dangerous to the Church. In spite of all, the leaders might be unwilling to

treat Paul otherwise than as a brother ; erring and wilful, indeed, but still one who had perilled his life in the cause of Christ, and had brought multitudes to believe in him ; one who, in spite of many infirmities and much unseemly violence, had never quite forgotten the ties that bound him to his believing countrymen ; one against whom they might have to protest, and whose aberrations they might lament or condemn, but whom, nevertheless, if he would concede something to their claims, it would be right to receive. But, perhaps, this is assuming too great a freedom from human infirmity on their part ; for had he not opposed and contemned themselves and their office, and done all in his power to sap the foundations of their authority ? And whatever might be the feelings of the heads of the Church, there can be no doubt that to the great majority who believed and were zealous for the Law, he was not a brother at all, but an enemy ; and the boasted success of his preaching was only a measure of the mischief he had wrought. What were these converts, whose numbers and liberality he paraded, and whose gifts were to purchase his recognition by the Church, but so many baptized heathens, unweaned from their former practices, and a scandal to the society of which they were nominally members ? We can well imagine that the spirit in which they would treat the proffered bribe, for as such they would regard it, would be that in which Peter is represented as treating the offer of Simon Magus : “Thy money perish with thee !” And the feelings of the Jews against one whom they would regard as a renegade would be almost equally bitter. If, therefore, it were contrary to the principles of the leaders of the Church to reject Paul, to receive him would be full of danger to the community ; since it would provoke dissension within the body and hostility from without. And, certainly, whatever merits he might possess, the faculty of conciliating opponents does not seem to have been one of them. On the contrary, he appears in almost every place to have provoked a deep personal hostility ; so that to the danger of collision arising from his known principles, there was superadded the yet greater

danger arising from his mode of treating his adversaries.<sup>1</sup> We can understand, therefore, that attempts should be made to turn him from his contemplated journey, though we can understand also how they failed of their purpose; and that, when it was found he persisted in his resolution, some trusted brother, known to Paul and probably having influence with him, should be sent to adjust the terms of his reception.

It is difficult from our present standpoint not to accuse James and the brethren at Jerusalem of narrow-mindedness and bigotry, for we view their conduct almost exclusively by the light of Paul's own statements; but we have only to realize their position at the time to see that no other course could have been possible to them. It was not merely that they lived in the midst of an intensely fanatical population, whose influence could not but be felt; all the traditions of the Church pointed in the direction of the observance of the Law, without which they could neither have continued to live in Jerusalem, nor have obtained converts among the Jews. Jesus himself had conformed to every legal requirement, and had protested against being supposed to sanction the breach of even the least commandment. And they necessarily believed the Law to be of Divine authority, and, as it proclaimed itself, of perpetual obligation. It had been given to their great prophet, Moses, by Jehovah himself, and it partook of the sacredness and inviolability of its Author. We need not inquire what would have been their feeling if Jesus had assumed to abrogate it; but since he had proclaimed its permanence, they could not allow to any one—and least of all to one whom they remembered as having with so much difficulty obtained the recognition of the Church—to treat it as a nullity. Nor could they allow to Paul the apostolical authority which he claimed;

<sup>1</sup> This is obvious from the story in the Acts, which, though it keeps out of sight the provocations given by Paul, and allows it to be supposed that his only offence consisted in preaching the Gospel, shows that the opposition was in most cases personal to himself, not including his colleagues. And it would be natural that such should be the case, if his letters are to be taken as a specimen of the temper in which he confronted his enemies, and the language he employed towards them.

for this was of itself a further offence. Some among them might remember the original appointment of the Twelve by Jesus; and many, probably, had been present at the meeting when—it being necessary to supply the void left in the number by the treachery of Judas—the election had been made by the whole body of the faithful, under the especial guidance of the Divine Spirit, from among those who possessed the same qualifications. How, then, could they recognize an Apostle in one who had assumed the title upon his own authority, who had never seen Jesus in his lifetime, and who only claimed to have seen him afterwards in a vision; since he could not be a witness either of his life or of his resurrection? Some, too, would be among the number of those upon whom the Holy Spirit had descended on the day of Pentecost,<sup>1</sup> so that it was impossible to believe that doctrines thus sanctioned were erroneous. And it was equally impossible that they should be convinced by his reasoning. It was not merely that his arguments were sophistical, and his application of the passages he quotes from their Scriptures unwarranted, but that they would be angered by the idea that any Jew should treat the Law as abrogated, and would not condescend to listen to the arguments by which he attempted to justify such an opinion. To them, as to the modern orthodox, no reasoning could be possibly worth consideration if it conducted to a heterodox conclusion. It would be a mere waste of time to examine a process proved to be erroneous by the result. We read the New Testament, and imagine it to be impossible that any one could believe in Jesus, and at the same time believe in the permanency of the Law. But, at this time, there was no New Testament; and the only writing that would possess any authority among the brethren in Jerusalem was the “Logia” of Matthew as it then existed; and that certainly contained nothing in derogation of the claims of the Law. They consequently looked at

<sup>1</sup> Though we may doubt the objective reality of the scene described in the Acts, that forms no reason for denying that there had been some conspicuous manifestation of the (supposed) miraculous gift of tongues, which was taken to be a proof of the descent of the Spirit upon the assembly.



the question in the light of the sayings then attributed to Jesus, and of the books of the Law themselves. From this point of view they could not but resist to the uttermost Paul and his practices.

Whatever deductions may be made from this statement on the ground of individual exceptions—and it is possible, though hardly probable, there may have been many such—we cannot, it seems, deny its general accuracy without contradicting our only authority; for that distinctly asserts that the brethren at Jerusalem, as a rule, were zealous for the Law. It was impossible, therefore, to allow Paul to enter the city in the avowed character of a member of the society, unless some previous arrangement were made. Difficult as it might be to repudiate his services and offerings, it would be fatal to accept them; for this would identify the leaders who were parties to the acceptance with doctrines which the entire body rejected. But there might be a way out of this dilemma—not, indeed, free from hazard, but still offering the possibility of a peaceable solution—if Paul were willing to make a public recantation, or what might be accepted as such. It is true that this would involve both parties in a seeming inconsistency; for James and the elders would recognize the agency of a man whom they had persistently repudiated, and Paul would seemingly abandon principles which he had declared to be of paramount importance. But as there was no power to prevent Paul's visit, and he continued firm to his purpose, this was, perhaps, the most prudent course. He must, probably, have expected some such demand, and have been prepared to concede something, since otherwise he could scarcely hope to be received at all. In that case, however, it was necessary that there should be some previous arrangement; for Paul could not leave it to the elders at Jerusalem to impose unconditionally the concessions they would require, any more than they could leave it to him to determine what he was to yield. And unless the terms were arranged beforehand, it was impossible, considering the bitterness of feeling on both sides—for we cannot suppose

that the brethren at Jerusalem would feel less intensely, or be more measured in the expression of their feelings, than Paul himself<sup>1</sup>—but that some difference should arise, of which no one could foresee the termination. There must be no discussion at the meeting to which Paul was to be admitted; for discussion would lead to recrimination, and this could only end in an irreparable breach. It was, consequently, only natural that Paul should be met by some delegate commissioned to ascertain the terms he was prepared to offer, and that he should remain at Cæsarea while a messenger was despatched to Jerusalem in order to learn if the proposed submission were satisfactory.

That Agabus, under such circumstances, should have sought, if possible, to avert the dangers he foresaw, by representing them in the most forcible manner to Paul himself, was no more than might be expected. But Paul was not to be deterred by any warnings; and, accordingly, arrangements were made for his reception. He was to leave Cæsarea in company with the disciple—Mnason of Cyprus—to whom was assigned the duty of lodging him—to enter Jerusalem in the evening with as little publicity as possible<sup>2</sup>—and then, on the following morning, to be admitted to an interview with James and the elders, who would prescribe the act of recantation which he was immediately to perform; after which we may presume that he would again be recognized as an agent of the society, and commissioned to preach the Gospel in new fields.

It must be confessed that the view we have taken of Paul's position, and of his object in visiting Jerusalem, differs greatly from what we should at first sight be disposed to infer from his own letters, and from the story in the Acts. But it is only requisite to read between the lines to see that something like this must have been the truth. His own letters afford abundant

<sup>1</sup> Comp. Jude iv. 8—13, 16; Gal. i. 8, 9, ii. 6, 11—13, v. 12, &c.; 2 Cor. xi. 13, &c.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xxi. 22, where it is implied that the majority of the brethren did not know of his arrival, which would have been impossible unless some precaution had been taken to keep it secret.

evidence of the growing strength of his opponents and of his own isolation in the Church ; for had one friendly hand been stretched out to help him, or one friendly voice been raised in his behalf, we may be sure it would have called forth, at any rate, a few words of grateful recognition. But the entire tone of the four letters written during the interval between the dispute at Antioch and the visit to Jerusalem, implies that there was no one whose name would carry weight in the Church who shared his opinions. On any other supposition, the care he takes to assert absolute originality and independence is unintelligible, unless we attribute to him a greater regard for his own dignity than for the success of his mission ; and that we see no ground for doing. Nor would this hypothesis fully account for his conduct ; for he might claim a special revelation to himself of the truths that he taught, and still corroborate them by showing either their substantial identity with the truths previously revealed to the Twelve, or that they had been recognized by the Church, or by some in authority there. But he allows his readers to suppose that this revelation was of something altogether unknown previously, and that would have remained so but for his preaching—not being adopted by any other teachers. And if he had found that his unaided efforts were being gradually overborne by the number and authority of his adversaries, even in places where he had first preached the Gospel, what chance could there be for him to maintain an independent position in Jerusalem—the stronghold of the party of the Apostles, and the centre of the opposition that had been directed against himself ? It might have been that, when he first contemplated the visit at a distance, he hoped that the offerings he should bring, and the proofs these would furnish of the success of his mission and of the extent of his personal influence, might make his recognition possible. If, however, he had ever entertained such a hope, it could not be maintained in face of the warnings that met him in every place ; so that he would soon feel that his choice lay between the abandonment of his purpose and submis-

sion to such terms as the leaders of the Church might impose ; and of the two, he chose the latter.

We can, of course, only judge of the nature of the arrangement by the account given of the interview to which Paul was admitted, and by the subsequent conduct of the parties ; and from these we may conclude that the concession made by Paul was met by a corresponding concession, or what was accepted as such, on the part of the leaders of the Church. The one recognized the continued obligation of the Law upon baptized Jews, including himself, and undertook to observe it for the future ; and the others ratified the concession already made with regard to Gentile converts, and promised that it should be more scrupulously respected. It might have been the case, that, just because of Paul's disregard of the decrees of the Council and his habitual depreciation of the Law, the agents of the Church had been led to exaggerate its claims, and to urge its adoption by Gentiles, in a manner which was scarcely consistent with the freedom that had been conceded to them. And if so, then the submission of Paul would afford an opportunity for a formal disclaimer of any such attempts, and a public recognition of the position to which Gentile converts were entitled by baptism. Such a view seems to be confirmed by the language employed in the address to Paul, and by the tone of his later Epistles, which appear to show that the question of the relation of the Law to Gentiles had lost nearly all its practical importance.

When the arrangements were completed, which almost certainly was not till after Pentecost, Paul and his party proceeded to Jerusalem, accompanied by his intended host, and, apparently, by some brethren from Cæsarea. At Jerusalem, we are told, "the brethren" welcomed him gladly ; but these must have been such as it was deemed prudent to make aware of his coming, and who awaited him at the house of Mnason. On the following morning they were admitted to an interview with James and the elders ; the terms employed excluding the Apostles, either by reason of their absence from the city, or because, under the cir-

cumstances, they deemed their presence inexpedient. At this meeting Paul is described as having "declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry;" and then, after glorifying the Lord, some unnamed brother, presumably not James, addressed him in what we may suppose to have been a concerted speech, reminding him of the prevalent feeling among the brethren with regard to the sacredness of the Law, informing him of accusations which had been made against himself, and recommending that he should prove by some act of ceremonial observance the falsehood of those accusations, and that he himself walked orderly and obeyed the Law; but denying any intention to require such obedience from Gentiles. And Paul, without a word of explanation or protest, acquiesced in the recommendation; and the very next day entered upon the performance of the act recommended! It would be difficult to mark more clearly the subordinate position that Paul was supposed to occupy in the Church. Not only is there an entire absence of any recognition of his apostolical dignity, but he is not even permitted a private interview with any of the Apostles or elders. He and his party are received at a formal meeting, to which he renders an account of his labours, and then he is addressed in terms which imply that, whatever services he might have rendered to the cause, he was under serious charges, which, if not disproved, would prevent his recognition as a brother, and might even demand his expulsion from the society. And he, so far from asserting his independence, or the divine origin of the doctrines he taught and the conduct flowing from them, practically recognizes the inferior rank assigned to him, and silently accepts the test proposed, with all that it involved.

Some writers, from the language employed in describing this scene, have attempted to draw a distinction between James and the elders, as though the silence of the former proved that he could not have been a party to imposing such terms, and that his influence was powerless to arrest the proceedings of the majority. And Messrs. Conybeare and Howson, in support of



this view, refer to the circumstance that he had (eight years previously) given the right hand of fellowship to Paul that he should go to the Gentiles. But they forget that this was when Paul was a colleague of Barnabas and a representative of the church of Antioch, before he had assumed the title of Apostle, and before he had withstood Peter for carrying out the wishes of James, and accused him of hypocrisy; and before also he had expressed contempt for James and his office. The fact that James had sanctioned Paul when he was acting in harmony with the Apostles and under their authority, would make him only the more ready to join in measures against him when he had resisted that authority, and had set at naught their decrees; for he might well fear lest the sanction thus unadvisedly given had been the means of introducing these scandals into the society. But it is easy to understand why James, the president of the assembly summoned to receive Paul, should not himself take a part in the discussion. He could have no wish to be exposed to a repetition of the scene at Antioch, if Paul at the last moment should shrink from the stipulated concession; and he would, therefore, leave it to some influential elder to be the medium of communication, reserving a personal intervention for some later period, should it be necessary. The supposition we have been considering, like the corresponding suggestion of M. Renan, of a difference of views between James and Peter, has no support either within or without the canon, and is based entirely upon mere arbitrary assumptions, arising out of the desire to save, on the one side, an inspired writer, and on the other a favourite Apostle, from the charge of sanctioning practices which, viewed in the light of later Christian sentiment, appear puerile and derogatory. It is obvious, however, that the whole proceeding must have had the full sanction of James; for no one at a meeting at which he presided would have made such a demand upon Paul's obedience, unless he had felt assured of the support of the one, as well as of the acquiescence of the other.

This is one of the cases in which we should be glad to be able

to reject the authority of the Acts, and to suppose that the writer was copying some report of the Judaizing opponents of Paul, invented for the purpose of depreciating his character. But this appears to be impossible; for not only does the writer speak in the character of an eye-witness, but the whole narrative is so connected and interdependent as not to allow of our separating this incident from the other portions without destroying the continuity of the whole. That Paul should have been received in the character of a brother without making some concession to the known feelings of the church at Jerusalem, was impossible; and though we may regard the actual concession as inconsistent with his principles, and one, therefore, which he was not likely to have made, yet an antecedent improbability of that nature is of very little weight against positive testimony, such as we seem to possess here.

In that case, however, it is not easy to acquit Paul of something like duplicity. Admitting that he might regard the act as indifferent in itself, this was one of the cases in which an indifferent act becomes all-important, because it is a test of principle. It was suggested to him as a means of proving that he had not walked disorderly, but had kept the Law; and it must have been performed by him with that object. But the accusation was well-founded, and the denial an untruth. He had walked disorderly. He had eaten with Gentiles when he knew that in all probability, perhaps certainly, he was partaking of meats offered to idols, and he had condemned Jews for refusing to continue this practice. And he had taught in emphatic words, applicable to Jew and Gentile alike, that the Law was no longer obligatory. In meats and drinks, in Sabbaths and new moons, and in circumcision, he had proclaimed not only freedom from the yoke of the Law, but opposition to its authority. Its observances were weak and beggarly elements; in Christ there was neither Jew nor Greek; circumcision was nothing; by admission into the body of Christ, believers became dead to the Law—nay, the Law was dead to them; those who insisted upon obedience

to its precepts sowed to the flesh, and could only reap corruption. So, and much more to the same effect, had he taught in his writings; and this implies in the strongest manner that he had habitually exemplified these doctrines in his practice. The reasonings, too, by which he justified to his Gentile converts the neglect of circumcision, would equally apply to Jews; nor can we doubt that he had often given such counsel to liberal Jews who had joined the society, and had in argument asserted this view against those who denied or doubted its propriety. So that whether he had or had not formally given such advice, his principles justified, and even required, that it should be given whenever the question arose. The ceremony, therefore, was an acted falsehood; and more than this, it proclaimed to the whole Church that Jews, even those who had been made new in Christ, were still debtors to keep the Law. And it would even seem to justify Judaizing teachers in urging upon Gentile converts, as essential parts of the Christian life, such observances or abstinences as might appear expedient. Or, if Paul could explain away these latter consequences, on whatever grounds—such, for instance, as modern apologists have invented for him—the act would justify a strange laxity in outward observances, and allow the same man to appear as a rigid Jew in Palestine, and to sit at meat in an idol's temple at Corinth.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Messrs. Conybeare and Howson argue that Paul habitually observed the Law and taught its observance to Jews, and, especially, that he did not teach Jews that they ought not to circumcise their children; and in support of this view they cite the shaving of the head at Cenchræa and the circumcising of Timothy. But the latter act was performed just after he had yielded in the matter of Titus, and when he was proceeding, in company with Silas, as a delegate from the church of Antioch; and, possibly, when it was necessary that there should be three circumcised brethren for the formation of new churches and the initiation of members; more than five years previously, and (as was also the shaving of the head) before the quarrel with Peter and his own claim of independence. No inference, obviously, can be drawn as to the character of his teaching in the three years that preceded his last visit to Jerusalem, from his having performed the act at this time and under these circumstances. But to suppose that Paul could teach as a fundamental position that the distinction between Jew and Gentile was abrogated in Christ—that circumcision, after admission into the Church, implied an obligation to keep the whole Law—and that by admission into the

Such was not the conduct of Luther at Worms, nor that of the Two Thousand who submitted to be ejected from their benefices rather than comply in matters indifferent in themselves, when such compliance was enforced as a duty; nor was such the conduct of Paul himself at Antioch. But, after all, inconsistencies of this nature are not so rare in the lives of men involved in any great movement, as to entitle us to visit this act of Paul with a severe condemnation. In all causes in which success depends upon the adhesion of the many, the stronger and more advanced members of the party must, from their position, perforce concede much to the weak and scrupulous; for such are often the most numerous, and always the most easily alienated. Having to choose between what they feel as unworthy compliances, and the disruption of the body, they are almost inevitably driven to adopt the former alternative; indemnifying themselves for the external submission by some biting epigrams among their intimates. Had we a record of Paul's table-talk, as we have of Luther's, we should doubtless find many pungent sayings with regard to the narrow-minded but noisy disciples who were clogs upon the free development of the faith, but whom it was needful to conciliate. All things might be lawful to Paul; but at Jerusalem to exhibit a contempt for the Law could not be expedient. And if anything was to be done to conciliate the brethren whom his proceedings had offended, and to disarm the hostility of the

body of Christ through baptism, the believer became dead to the Law (and this applied especially to Jews), and yet refrain from impressing these doctrines upon baptized Jews; or that, while impressing upon his converts the worthlessness of the Law, he himself scrupulously observed its precepts, thus proving that neither was it dead to him nor he to it—would be to exhibit him in a very different character to that which he claims for himself. And there must have been some trace of this in his writings; for he could not fail to have offered some explanation of the seeming inconsistency between his teaching and his practice. That in company with Jews, who would be shocked at any open violation of the Law, he habitually observed it, he himself tells us; but he tells us also that to those without the Law he became as without the Law. His maxim of doing all things to edification, becoming all things to all men, necessarily involved him in occasional seeming inconsistencies; but not in the inconsistency of preaching the abrogation of the Law, and at the same time and before the same persons exhibiting a scrupulous observance of all its obligations.

Jews, the more speedy and public the act, the more completely might it be expected to accomplish its intended purpose.

The compliance of Paul is therefore intelligible; the necessary consequence of his position, if inconsistent with the principles he had enforced to his converts; the price he must pay to purchase recognition by the Church. And we can well understand that he might be anxious to obtain such recognition, even at the price of more costly compliances. He could scarcely be otherwise than weary of his isolation, and of the perpetual conflicts in which he was engaged. However firmly he might be convinced of the truth of his views, and however resolute in their assertion, there must have been many moments of weakness and despondency—moments when fears within responded to assaults from without, and when he must have yearned above all things for rest and peace. He could not feel as he did for others without being keenly sensitive to their feelings for him. His intense faculty of realizing the distresses of his followers<sup>1</sup> would make him keenly susceptible of hostility, and still more of abandonment. To find coldness where he had been accustomed to meet affection—scorn where he had been regarded with reverence—to be disowned by those who would once have plucked out their very eyes for him—to have his teachings contradicted, his pretensions derided, his character traduced—to see the very churches he had founded falling off to the side of his enemies—must have been hard to endure. That all this was done in the name, if not by the instrumentality, of the very men by whom he had been previously accredited to the Gentiles, and whose claims to authority, tried by every available test, were superior to his own, must have made his position more painful and more difficult; for he could not forget their former kindness to himself, any more than he could dispute their right to teach. And “Paul the aged,” for such he was becoming, might feel that he was no longer equal to the permanent maintenance of a con-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 29: “Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?” &c.



flict of which, when it commenced, he had foreseen neither the extent nor the bitterness. The hardships and sufferings of which he "boasts" in his second letter to the Corinthians, could not have passed over him without leaving their traces in his frame. He might be as willing as ever to do and to suffer in the name of his Lord, but he must have been conscious of some abatement of his pristine vigour. We, in looking at the contest, see chiefly the height to which he is able to raise himself, and the firm and uncompromising stand that he makes against his assailants; but we do not picture to ourselves the painful reaction by which they are followed. Who, for instance, reading his first letter to the Corinthians—full as it is of resolute self-assertion, instinct with the feeling of conscious rectitude and conscious power—could have suspected, if Paul himself had not told us, his state of mind after it was despatched—the fears by which he was agitated, and the trembling anxiety with which he awaited the return of his messenger? And such alternations of mood must have been habitual. But to a man thus constituted, a reconciliation that should re-unite him to those who believed in the same Lord and waited for the same resurrection, and restore peace to the Church torn by the strife which his pretensions had aroused, would become almost a necessity. Nor must we overlook the possibility that even in his own mind there were occasional doubts whether the right was altogether on his side. If he justified his own opinions by the belief that "he had the mind of Christ," he must have sometimes admitted it to be possible that those who had known the Lord so long and so intimately, might make a similar claim; and this admission would introduce an element of doubt into his convictions. And, after all, the difference between himself and them, great as it might be, did not affect the essentials of their common belief, and could not justify a permanent schism.

We may, therefore, believe that Paul performed the act imposed upon him in good faith, intending it, not as a proof of former, but as a pledge of future conformity, and as a public

recognition of the continual obligation of the Law upon all the children of Israel, including himself. But the concession came too late to disarm the hostility of the Jews, and too late also to allay the distrust with which he was regarded by the extreme party among the Jewish brethren. Probably they both regarded it as a mockery on his part, and they could scarcely be blamed if such were their feeling; for a mere ritual observance of this nature could not be held to outweigh the evidence as to his real sentiments afforded by his writings and his practices during the last three years. It needed, then, only some casual incident to arouse these feelings, and this was furnished by his having been seen in public by some Jews from Asia in company with an uncircumcised Gentile convert, and being afterwards met by them in the Temple; leading them to infer that he had brought his companion with him inside the sacred enclosure. This, we are told, gave rise to a tumultuous attempt to seize him, in which he ran no small risk of being torn to pieces. Indeed, he was only saved from this fate by the interference of the Roman soldiers quartered in the immediate vicinity, who with some difficulty succeeded in rescuing him from the mob; having effected which, they carried him as a prisoner into the tower for the purpose of investigating the cause of the tumult.

In the description of the immediately succeeding events, the writer, who drops the use of the first person, which he does not resume till the departure from Cæsarea, appears to have given full scope to his imagination; and his story is utterly unreliable. It may, indeed, be suggested that he obtained the particulars of the conversation with the chief captain from Paul himself, and that he was present when Paul addressed the multitude from the stairs of the tower. But of this there is no suggestion in the work, and the utter incongruousness of the story with the position of the parties renders it highly improbable. And even if these suggestions were admitted, that would form no guarantee for the truth of the story he tells; for his object plainly is not to give a simple account of the events as they

occurred, but the exaltation of Paul and the peace of the Church. It is impossible to suppose that the chief captain should have taken Paul for the Egyptian who had just before scarcely escaped with his life from the force sent to suppress his revolt, and who certainly was one of the last persons that could be expected to show himself publicly in Jerusalem; or that he would be led to doubt this conclusion by finding that Paul could speak Greek, for that is precisely what the Egyptian must have done. And we may doubt whether he would have interrupted the conveyance of a prisoner to a place of security, for the purpose of allowing him to make a speech to the crowd from which he had been rescued. However much it might please a Christian of the next generation to imagine that Paul's intrinsic dignity should impress itself upon all with whom he was brought in contact, whatever their office or rank, we may question whether Lysias was a person to feel much respect for a Jew wearing a Nazarite garb, and barely rescued with life from a mob of his countrymen, or to suspend the performance of his duty for his sake. That he was not so impressed is, indeed, shown by his immediately succeeding intention to examine Paul by scourging. But, assuming that the testimony of a person who had ample means of knowing the facts, is sufficient to outweigh these improbabilities, it is certain that the speech is a pure piece of invention, composed from the point of view of the writer, and having no meaning, either as coming from Paul, or as addressed to the crowd under the actual circumstances; and this of itself affords a strong ground for concluding that the occasion was invented as well as the speech. Paul had been accused, not of preaching Jesus as the Messiah, nor of preaching him to the Gentiles, but of having taught against the people, and the Law, and the Temple; and especially of having crowned his offences by bringing Greeks into the holy place to profane the Temple. But the speech is directed to vindicate his conversion to Christianity, and his having preached the Gospel to the Gentiles, although there were, we are told, thousands of

believers in Jesus living peaceably in Jerusalem, and the habitual admission of Gentiles into the society must have been notorious. He is even made to appeal to the high-priest and elders in proof of his assertion, as if they were the same as those who more than twenty years before had entrusted him with the commission which he had abandoned, or as though so skilful a rhetorician would have reminded his hearers of what they would inevitably regard as an act of base treachery. Had he done so, there would have been innumerable voices in the crowd to brand him as a traitor, and the tumult would have at once recommenced. The speech, as we have it, is the composition of a man who looks at events only from the point of view of a later age in the Church, when it was an offence in the eyes of the Jews to be a Nazarene, and who is incapable of realizing, or who does not trouble himself to consider, how they would appear to the actors in the scene.

Finding it impossible from the tumult—whether that from which Paul had been rescued, or that which his speech provoked—to ascertain anything as to the reason of the disturbance, the commander of the garrison, we are told, gave orders to examine Paul himself, in the ordinary Roman method in the case of provincials accused or suspected of an offence, by scourging; but Paul on this occasion claimed his privilege at once, instead of waiting, as at Philippi, until after the order had been obeyed; and thus escaped the infliction.<sup>1</sup> And on the following day a meeting of the Sanhedrim was directed to be held, before which he was taken, for the purpose of enabling the commander to ascertain whether there was in reality any charge against him which would justify his detention.

The natural proceeding would seem to have been to free Paul from custody so soon as it was ascertained that he was a Roman

<sup>1</sup> It is singular that Paul, according to his own statement (2 Cor. xi. 25) should on three separate occasions have been subjected to a punishment from which, as a Roman citizen, he was exempt, and the infliction of which would have involved the functionary giving the order in serious responsibilities. It seems clear that he was a Roman citizen. Is it possible that his memory may have been at fault?

citizen, unless some formal charge had been made against him; for there was nothing in the circumstance of his having been assailed by a mob to raise the presumption of an offence against the Roman, or even against the Jewish law. We may conclude, therefore, that there was something more than appears upon the face of the narrative, though we cannot determine what it was. It might be that the motive for his detention was the same that, we are told, afterwards prompted his being sent to Cæsarea—the danger he would run from the excited populace if set free in their midst; or there might have been some formal charge lodged so soon as he was found to be beyond the reach of popular vengeance. Of the two, the latter is the more probable, since a Roman functionary would not so far condescend to Jewish animosities as to bring a Roman citizen before a provincial tribunal for the mere purpose of affording his enemies an opportunity of finding some ground of accusation against him. Or it may be conjectured that, at the time of the rescue, Paul had been in the custody of officers of the Sanhedrim, who were unable to protect him against the mob without the help of the garrison, and that, after he had claimed the privilege of citizenship, it was impossible to restore him to their custody; in which case, however, he could not be liberated until the grounds of his original detention had been investigated. Whatever was the motive, we are told that he was sent by the commandant before the Jewish tribunal in order that the nature of the charge might be investigated.

The description of the sitting of the Council, and of Paul's conduct before it, and of the stratagem, more adroit than honourable, by which, at the expense of a deliberate falsehood, he purchased a momentary respite for himself, is so graphic and lifelike, as to suggest at first sight the relation of an eye-witness; but this impression hardly survives a careful examination. It may have been consistent with Paul's temperament, and with the feeling of security against immediate consequences, by reason of the vicinity of the soldiers who had brought him to the spot, and who would be responsible for his safety, that he should com-



mence by an arrogant, and, under the circumstances, unmeaning, assertion of his own conscientiousness; when it would be a matter of course that the president should order him to be silenced, in order that the business for which they were summoned might commence; and it would be likely that this silencing was to be effected in the most summary manner. But he would not have been permitted further to interrupt the proceedings by cursing and reviling the high-priest, with no other interruption than the appeal of some of the bystanders to his own sense of right. Nor can we suppose that a tribunal thus convened would be led off the real object of their meeting by a statement not only false in itself, but known to be false, probably, by every one of those present. For, though it may be admitted that in one sense Paul might describe himself as a Pharisee, having been brought up as such, yet, in the sense in which his assertion would be understood, it was absolutely untrue, for he had long publicly abjured their opinions and their practices; and this abjuration was notorious; while there was not a shadow of foundation for the further statement that it was touching the hope and resurrection of the dead that he was brought in question. And the falsehood of this must have been even more notorious; for the circumstance of the Roman garrison having rescued a renegade Jew, accused of polluting the Temple and of having systematically violated the Law and preached its nullity, would have spread at once through the whole city, and every individual member of the Sanhedrim would have known that this was the offence of which he was accused. But the writer was only anxious to signalize the courage and cleverness of his hero, without regard to his veracity or the mere common sense of his judges; and partly by reason of the inimitable charm of his style, but principally by reason of his work having been adopted into the canon, he has succeeded in procuring the acceptance of the picture he has drawn. Orthodox commentators, accordingly, have had imposed upon them the task of proving, either that there was a sense in which Paul's statement

was not false, or that, under the circumstances, falsehood was justifiable. We, however, prefer to believe that Paul was not guilty of the inveracity imputed to him; though we feel that in exculpating him we show how low was the author's standard of truthfulness, and how little credit, therefore, is due to his story in all matters that bear upon his object in writing. The subsequent course of events, even as related by himself, implies that there was some formal accusation made against Paul, so that the meeting could not have broken up in disorder, as he describes it; and this accusation must have involved some grave punishment, such as to warrant an appeal to the Emperor, and must have been made by the Jewish authorities. Paul, a Roman, would not have been sent bound to Cæsarea, and detained in bonds there, unless he had been at the time under accusation for some offence "worthy of death or bonds."

We learn nothing from the Acts as to the conduct of the brethren in Jerusalem during these proceedings. Doubtless, they took every care to free themselves from all suspicion of complicity with the opinions and practices attributed to Paul; and, probably, many of them sympathized in secret, and perhaps openly, with his accusers. But there is nothing in any of Paul's later Epistles to suggest hostility or abandonment on the part of the general body. There is no hint of dissatisfaction with any portion of the Church; and though complaints are made of unknown individuals,<sup>1</sup> there is nothing to indicate any organized opposition to himself. James and the elders may have been satisfied with his submission, and he may have done nothing subsequently inconsistent with his taking upon himself the Nazarite vow. Or was it only that the growing troubles in Jerusalem—which resulted in the execution of James not long after Paul's arrival in Rome—prevented any interference on their part? However this may be, there is no ground for suspecting any complicity on the part of the heads of the Church in the measures

<sup>1</sup> Phil. i. 15.

directed against him at this time,<sup>1</sup> any more than for supposing they were involved in them. He was not charged as a Nazarene; for in that case James, as the recognized head of the sect, could not have escaped. Whatever his offence, it was personal to himself, not including any others of the body.

After the close of the meeting, Paul was brought back in custody; and so strong was the feeling against him, that, we are told, a number of Jews, impatient at the tardy process of the law, and uncertain of the result—and also, we may suppose, indignant at the interference of the Romans in a matter affecting their religion—determined to anticipate the course of justice by themselves becoming the executioners of the sentence which, in their eyes, Paul had incurred, and to take the opportunity of his next being brought before the Council to accomplish their purpose. A conspiracy of this nature could scarcely be kept secret, considering the numbers engaged; and news of the project was brought by his nephew to Paul, who immediately took measures to have the chief captain informed of the plot; and he determined at once to send his prisoner to Cæsarea, where he would be secure from such attempts, and at the same time to remit the case to the higher tribunal of the Procurator.

The alleged conspiracy was so far in accordance with the practice of the Jews, in the case of offences against their Law which the Romans refused to recognize, that we need feel no difficulty in accepting it as historical. Orthodox writers are loud in their denunciations of such a project; but upon their own principles they ought to be more lenient in their judgment. The Law of Moses, which they accept and enforce as the Law of God, denounced death against any one who violated its precepts; and Jesus had emphatically declared that he came not to destroy but to fulfil that Law; and that till heaven and earth passed away, no

<sup>1</sup> M. Renan, from an expression of Clement in his Epistle to the Corinthians, i. 5, half suggests that the tumult which led to Paul's imprisonment was excited by the "false brethren" acting from envy. But he forgets that the writer is speaking of Paul's whole career and fate, not of his arrest, and that he attributes the troubles of Peter to envy also. The passage appears to lend no colour to the suggestion.

part, however minute or seemingly insignificant, should fail. Although, therefore, Paul, who had received a revelation which superseded the Law of Moses, and authorized him to do what Jesus had declared was not to be done, might be justified in violating the Law and in teaching its nullity, the Jews, who had no such revelation, were equally justified in maintaining its sacredness and enforcing its penalties. And if Gentile rulers, who scoffed at Jehovah, protected renegades against the punishment He had awarded, there was only the more need that those who valued His favour more than their own personal safety, and who felt it to be their duty to obey God rather than man, should risk their lives for the purpose of executing the Divine sentence; and they would justify their purpose by the examples of Ehud, and Jael, and Judith. If the Pentateuch is what it is assumed to be—a literal record of the voice of God speaking through the human instrument by whom the words were inscribed—then these Jews were justified; for no one can pretend that they were bound to believe the private revelation which Paul claimed to have received, even though authenticated by miracles, since this had been expressly provided against in the Law. Nor could they be freed from their obligation because idolatrous rulers chose to treat the Law as a nullity. We, however, who recognize the temporary character of all religious formulas, even the highest, and the grievous evils occasioned to mankind by attempts to enforce them under altered conditions, and who claim it as the right of every man to frame his own conceptions of God and of the Divine Law, subject to no other restrictions than those which the security of the State and the corresponding rights of others may impose, may blame the contemplated act while exonerating the actors. They did what was right according to their standard of rectitude; but the Law which formed that standard was human and temporary;<sup>1</sup> and they proved their

<sup>1</sup> Let any one remember the fate of Archbishop Sharpe at the hands of the Covenanters, and the assassinations under pretence of religion by fanatics of every creed, and he will not regard these Jews as guilty of any exceptional atrocity.

sincerity by the readiness with which they confronted death in all its most abhorrent forms during the siege of Jerusalem.

With Paul, the commander sent, we are informed, a letter assigning the cause of his imprisonment, and the motive of his having been transferred to Cæsarea. The writer of the Acts professes to give us a copy of this letter; but here, as in so many other places, the hand of the author is apparent, and it probably answers rather to his conception of what it was likely would be written, than to the actual document. It is not probable that a copy of the letter would have been given to Paul, or that the writer of the Acts could have subsequently procured one, even if he had made the attempt. And unless there had been some serious charge against Paul, he would not have been sent in strict custody, chained, presumably, to a soldier. The letter, therefore, as we have it, which not only asserts his substantial innocence, but implies that no charge had been made against him, is inconsistent with the conduct of Lysias. The story is obviously more to be relied upon when it deals with facts which were obvious and notorious—such as Paul having been sent a prisoner and bound to Cæsarea, and being afterwards kept in Herod's prætorium, waiting the arrival of his accusers, which imply that he was under a serious accusation—than when it purports to furnish the copy of a letter from the commander of the garrison at Jerusalem to the Procurator.

The comment of Messrs. Conybeare and Howson upon this letter affords an illustration of the spirit of orthodox historians too characteristic to be passed over. They state, what is a matter of course, that the letter, as an official document accompanying the transfer of a prisoner, would be in Latin, so that what we have is a translation, and consequently exposed to the risk of error on the part of the translator; and yet they treat it as absolutely accurate, and charge Lysias with having been guilty of a "dexterous falsehood," for the purpose of saving himself from disgrace, by stating that his knowledge of Paul's citizenship was the cause of the rescue, when in truth he only



knew it afterwards. But it is obvious that this is to invert the plainest rules of historical criticism; for, certainly, an official communication written at the time, and accompanying the person to whom it referred, would be entitled to more weight than the hearsay report of conversations, reduced to writing months, or perhaps years, afterwards. And it is difficult to understand what cause of disgrace there could be in a statement of the real facts, if they occurred as the writer of the Acts represents. The commander of the garrison interfered to save an unknown Jew from being torn in pieces by the mob, and afterwards, learning that he was a Roman, took measures for his personal protection, and for the investigation of the charges against him. No man could be bound to recognize a citizen of Rome in a Jew performing a Nazarite vow in the Temple; and Lysias had accepted Paul's own statement without requiring it to be corroborated. But the obvious fact is, that the writer no more thought that he was introducing a falsehood into the letter, than he did with regard to the various, and in part inconsistent, statements which he has given himself, or which he has placed in the mouth of Paul, of the circumstances attending his conversion. He wrote what seemed probable, or what he supposed to be accurate, and would not have troubled himself to alter his manuscript for the purpose of making all the parts of the story absolutely agree, if even he had perceived these inconsistencies, which, probably, he did not. It is the minute investigations of criticism which has detected them.

It may rather be suggested that the letter of Lysias, taken in connection with the speech subsequently made by Tertullus, shows that Paul was not in the hands of a disorderly mob, but in those of the Council for the purpose of judgment; and that the intervention of the commander had been caused by some appeal on the part of Paul or of his friends for protection on the ground of his citizenship. And if we could be sure that we had before us substantially a copy of the letter, or an accurate report of the speech, we should be disposed to adopt this view. But the

description of the scene in the Temple, and of the rescue, appears to be more entitled to credit; for here the writer would probably feel himself bound by facts, while in letters and speeches he would have no other restraint than that imposed by his own idea of what would be probable under the circumstances, regarded from his own standpoint. And yet it might have been that the Jews who had accused Paul of violating the Temple had proposed to take him forthwith before the Sanhedrim, and for this purpose had delivered him over to their officers, and that either the officers were unable to protect him from the mob, so necessitating the intervention of the garrison, or Paul, fearing the result, or one of his companions, had appealed to the commandant, who, as he was bound to do, had interfered for the purpose of preventing a provincial tribunal from judging a Roman. In that case, however, Lysias would not have sent him before the tribunal from whose jurisdiction he had been taken in order to ascertain the grounds of his seizure, but would have required the accusers at once to state their charge; when, if it was of sufficient importance, he would keep Paul in custody, for the purpose of remitting him to the tribunal of the Procurator; he himself, probably, not having authority to decide any question involving the life or liberty of a citizen.

The conduct of Lysias throughout the whole affair appears to have been free from blame, with the single exception of his alleged purpose to examine Paul by scourging. And for this he was no more responsible than an English magistrate for the hardships and injustice of the system he administers—the arrest and imprisonment of an accused person before the charge is investigated, and the often lengthened imprisonment of an innocent man before trial. The Romans, while recognizing the right of every citizen, whatever his birth, to the protection of the law, looked upon mere provincials in much the same light as many Englishmen of the present day are apt to look upon “niggers,” as they contemptuously designate members of the darker races, even the well-born and the well-bred; and the

question by scourging was the ordinary method of ascertaining the nature of the offence with which a provincial prisoner was charged, and his guilt or innocence. And it is even doubtful whether he had given the order, since if Paul had been rescued because he was a Roman citizen, as some circumstances indicate, he certainly would not have done so. There appears, consequently, no justification for the manner in which his character is depicted by M. Renan, who is, perhaps, not quite just to the *roturier* agents of the Empire. Lysias may have been a man of ignoble extraction, who had purchased his citizenship; but his rise in the Roman army, in spite of his provincial birth, argues the possession of some superior qualities; and he would not have been selected to command the garrison at Jerusalem—a position of peculiar responsibility—had he been the ignorant and brutal soldier whom M. Renan depicts. Nor would a Syrian placed in that position have been so completely at a loss to understand the Jewish customs, or the general character of the question between Paul and his accusers. It was his duty to ascertain the nature of the accusation, in order to see whether it justified the detention of the prisoner for trial; and, if it did, then to hear the case himself, if within his jurisdiction, and if not, to remit it to the Procurator; and this duty he seems to have rightly discharged.

On the arrival of Paul at Cæsarea, inquiries were made as to the province of which he was a native, and probably into the truth of his claim; and then he was remitted to custody to Herod's prætorium, still bound, waiting the arrival of what, in modern phraseology, we should call the prosecutors. When they had arrived, Felix held a court for the purpose of hearing the case. The high-priest was present in person, having taken the journey for the purpose; and he was represented before the Procurator by one Tertullus, an advocate retained for the occasion. We need not follow the writer through the description he gives of the scene, and his report of the speeches attributed to Tertullus and Paul; for here, certainly, we can have no ground

to expect accuracy or impartiality ; he would have felt himself a traitor to his cause had he not weakened the accusation, and to the best of his ability strengthened the defence. And it is quite possible that he has kept out of sight altogether the real charges against Paul ; for had they been only such as he describes, the high-priest would not, probably, have troubled himself to be present, unless, indeed, Paul had been, as the speech of Tertullus implies, brought originally before the Sanhedrim, from whose tribunal he was removed by Lysias. In this event, it would be natural that the high-priest, as president of the Council, should be present to vindicate his attempted exercise of jurisdiction. Nor can we suppose that he has accurately reported Paul, unless we attribute to the latter an absolute disregard of truth ; for how could he speak of himself as believing in all things written in the book of the Law, when he had emphatically taught that the Law was abrogated ? Any one reading this speech, and knowing nothing of Paul from his own writings, would suppose that there could be no foundation for the charge that he had himself neglected to observe the Law, or that he had ever taught that it was no longer binding. But we may accept as true that the accusers failed to induce Felix to re-transfer the cause to their tribunal, and that, though Paul was detained in custody, he was treated with exceptional lenity, being freed from chains, and allowed unrestrained intercourse with his friends.

During the remainder of the procuratorship of Felix, Paul continued a prisoner, being, we are told, often admitted to his presence, and once having an opportunity of preaching to him the doctrines that he taught, when he reasoned of temperance, righteousness, and judgment to come, so that "Felix trembled," but obviously without producing any permanent effect upon his opinions or character. How much of this account is due to the imagination of the writer, and how much to the relation of Paul, dwelling in after years upon the recollections of this period, it is impossible to say ; but we may be sure that the account which

Felix would have given of the occurrence to his friends must have been widely different, and probably more accurate. The cause of this continued imprisonment is stated to have been the hope that money should be given him by Paul; and from the character of Felix as depicted by Tacitus and Josephus, we can have little doubt that he would be accessible to a bribe. Nevertheless, we may hesitate to accept the accusation in this instance, at least in the form in which it is made. Felix had received Paul as a prisoner in chains, from which, after having heard the charge, he had freed him, and had also allowed him the unusual privilege of enjoying the free access of his friends; and this continued until just before his own departure from Judæa, when he was removed from office. It is obvious from the conduct of the Jewish authorities upon the arrival of Festus, when we learn that almost their first act was to request that the cause should be at once heard, that they must have felt themselves aggrieved by the delay in the proceedings, and, no doubt, they were scandalized by the unusual favours accorded to the prisoner. It would, therefore, have been almost a matter of course that Felix, when he found himself superseded, should replace Paul in the same kind of custody in which he had received him; not in order to please the Jews, but in the simple performance of an official duty. And this view is confirmed by the fact that Festus, against whom no suspicion of corruption has been breathed, continued to keep Paul in chains; from which, indeed, he was never freed until after his arrival at Rome. If, then, there were any bribery in the case, it is probable that it was the motive for the indulgences conceded; for money might be expected to purchase these in ordinary cases. Felix, if his character was such as is described, would not otherwise have granted them; and Paul had wealthy friends who would be willing to contribute freely for the purpose. To set at liberty a prisoner who had been brought before the highest tribunal in Judæa and removed from their jurisdiction, would be, however, a very different matter, and Felix might have shrunk from the responsibility of



such an act, or have rated the favour at so high a price as to be beyond the means that Paul could command. But as he was recalled at the instance of the Jews, and because his corruption and partiality had become intolerable, it is highly probable that one of their complaints against him, whether well or ill founded, may have been his having been bribed by Paul, or by his friends, and having then treated him with unjustifiable lenity, and even having refused to allow him to be brought to justice.

The new Procurator, Porcius Festus, was a Roman, a member of one of the old historic houses, and a man of unblemished reputation. On his arrival in the province, he proceeded without delay to Jerusalem, and there he was at once informed of the case of Paul, and, we are told, was requested to have him brought for trial to Jerusalem. With this request he declined to comply, until after his return to Cæsarea, where he would find a record of all the proceedings. This request of the authorities is attributed by the writer of the Acts to their hope that they might by this means obtain an opportunity of assassinating Paul; but imputations of this character, founded upon mere suspicion and by an unfriendly writer, carry with them no weight whatever. There might have been zealots who would have rejoiced to be furnished with any opportunity of becoming the executioners of the law; but they would not have obtained access to Festus, nor would the high-priest and his officers have been their mouth-piece. The latter would be only desirous to vindicate their authority by procuring the re-transfer of a prisoner to their tribunal, and would, as they were bound to do, protect him against any one who attempted to anticipate their sentence.

Immediately on the return of Festus to Cæsarea, Paul was again brought face to face with his accusers, who must have accompanied Festus from Jerusalem for the purpose; thus proving their own confidence in the strength of their case, and the importance they attached to its early decision. Here we have no report of the speech on behalf of the high-priest, but are only told that "the Jews laid many and grievous charges against

him," none of which were proved; and Paul contents himself with a general denial of any offence against Jews, or against the Temple, or against Cæsar. The report of the scene, taken in connection with the grounds of Paul's appeal, suggests that it was not a hearing of the case for the purpose of determining the guilt or innocence of Paul, but only of deciding whether he had been properly removed from the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrim, or whether his offence was one which they were authorized to try. Festus, indeed, is made to propose only a change in the place of trial, he, apparently, being the judge in either case; but the reason of Paul's appeal implies that the proposal—or rather the decision—was, that he should be delivered to the Jews for trial. And this explains the appeal to Cæsar. The Jews, we may believe—or rather the high-priest through his advocate—showed reasons for remitting the case to the tribunal from which it had been removed, which satisfied Festus and his assessors; and upon their decision to this effect being announced to Paul, he exercised his right of appeal, for otherwise there would have been nothing to appeal against. The Emperor, it is true, might arrest the proceedings at any stage, and transfer the cause to his immediate jurisdiction; but this implies that the prisoner could not. He could only appeal from a definite sentence, which in this case must have been of condemnation, or of disallowance of his claim to have his cause removed from the court of the Sanhedrim. Festus had full power to hear and to decide; and when he had decided, an appeal lay to the Emperor from his decision; but it would have paralyzed the administration of justice throughout the whole Empire if every Roman citizen had possessed the power, at any stage of the proceedings, of transferring to the Imperial Court the preliminary investigation. Nor is there any ground for supposing that such a power was ever exercised, or that it could have been allowed by Festus and his council in the case of Paul.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Sanday, in his work on the fourth Gospel, p. 248, speaks of my "reconstruction," as he terms it, of the history of the arrest and trial of Jesus (in the "Jesus

This, however, suggests that the Jewish authorities had a better basis for their proceedings than we should at first imagine, and that the real transaction was different from what is described. We see that, at the first, Tertullus is made to complain of an interference of Lysias with the course of justice, implying that Paul was in the position of being judged by the Sanhedrim, when Lysias interfered and finally rescued him; then Felix, though he refuses to send him back to their tribunal, does not attempt to judge him himself; then the high-priest, immediately on the arrival of Festus, complains of the delay, and asks that the rights of the Sanhedrim may be recognized; and then Festus, after hearing Paul and his accusers, decides that this claim (or the original accusation) is well founded, and that Paul (was guilty or) had been improperly removed from the original jurisdiction to which he must be remitted; from which decision Paul appeals. And it is especially noticeable that it is the Procurator whom both Roman and Jewish historians denounce as a corrupt and venal ruler, whose favour could be purchased by bribes, who shows indulgence to Paul and refuses to allow the claim of the high-priest; while his upright successor, whose justice no one has impeached, keeps him in chains, and, apparently, decides to remit his cause to the Jewish Council. We cannot pretend to explain, and it is scarcely worth while to conjecture, the real nature of the charge against Paul,<sup>1</sup> or the

of History") as an "arbitrary caprice," and asks why I should destroy a picture that is consistent and intelligible, &c. Mr. Sanday should have a collectorship in India for a couple of years, and then he would be able to judge how far it was probable that an English gentleman should act in the manner and for the reasons attributed in the Gospels to Pilate, who was a Roman gentleman; and what credit is due to the opinions of Orientals as to the motives and conduct of their Western rulers. I cannot but believe that such experience would make him feel that the story was neither consistent nor intelligible; and, further, that the circumstance that it was "rich in details" and in "the finest shades of characteristics," would diminish, instead of augmenting, its authority. Or, perhaps, a stipendiary magistracy in Ireland would do almost as well.

<sup>1</sup> Could it have been connected with his desertion of the service of the high-priest so many years before, which had never been condoned, and was now brought forward when he had been thus forced upon the notice of the authorities? The silence of the Acts is of no weight against such a supposition, for the writer is studiously vague in describing the charges made against Paul before Festus.

motives for the proceedings of Lysias, or the stage of the proceedings when he did interfere; but we may conclude that, in the opinion of an impartial judge, the claims of the Sanhedrim were well founded, and the conduct of Paul such as to render him amenable to their jurisdiction; or that Paul was guilty of the offences imputed to him.

The conclusion at which we have arrived is at variance with the reported speech of Festus to Agrippa, and the opinion expressed after hearing Paul's defence;<sup>1</sup> but certainly the writer of the Acts, whether Luke or not, could not have been present at the interview he describes, nor be in a position to obtain a verbatim report of the accusations. Doubtless the whole incident of the hearing before Agrippa is an invention on his part, for the purpose of exhibiting his hero superior to imprisonment and danger, preaching the Gospel fearlessly before kings and rulers. The speech attributed to Paul could not have been spoken by him if he wrote the letters bearing his name; for he could not have claimed to have preached "to them in Jerusalem and throughout all the coasts of Judæa, and then to the Gentiles," when he had solemnly, and under the sanction of an oath, told the churches in Galatia that, after he had begun preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles, he was unknown by face to the churches in Judæa;<sup>2</sup> any more than he could have described the Gospel which he preached as being, that Christ should "show light unto the people (= the Jews) and the Gentiles,"<sup>3</sup> if he had written the Epistle to the Romans. But this speech, like so many others, is written from the point of view of the author, and can only be attributed to Paul on the supposition that he systematically dissembled his real opinions when defending himself against the charges of the Jews, and did not scruple to have recourse to any artifice for the purpose of producing a favourable effect upon his judges.

We may even doubt whether there was any interview between

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxv. 14—21, xxvi. 31, 32.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xxvi. 20; Gal. i. 21—23.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xxvi. 23.

Agrippa and Paul, and we may be quite certain that if there were, it would not have been public. It was impossible that Festus should have held a sitting of his court for the purpose of hearing the defence or explanation of a prisoner who had removed himself beyond his jurisdiction, and whom he could neither absolve nor condemn; thus giving a pretext for the charge that he had usurped or interfered with Imperial prerogatives; nor could Agrippa have requested so unseemly a course. And if Festus had been really ignorant of the offences with which Paul was charged, he would not have been so unused to the practice of Roman judicature, or so deficient in common sense, as to dream of ascertaining these from the mouth of the accused, instead of requiring them to be stated by the accuser. But we may be sure that no Roman judge would proceed to hear the cause of a prisoner, unless there had been a formal charge defining the offence, which was explicitly denied by the prisoner,<sup>1</sup> thus raising a question to which the evidence might be referred, and upon which judgment might be pronounced. The Roman law was harsh and often unjust, but at least it required precision and formality in the charge, and a record of all the proceedings. It may have been possible that Agrippa was curious to learn some particulars of the nature of the new movement, which was adding another to the existing Jewish sects; and if so, there would be no difficulty in furnishing him with an opportunity of having an interview with Paul. But there is something almost ludicrous in the idea that Porcius Festus, a member of a house which had given consuls to Rome, and therefore, as a matter of course, trained in public affairs and in the study of the law, should have had a Roman citizen delivered to him as a prisoner; should have held a court with his assessors for the purpose of investigating his case; and should have admitted his appeal to the Emperor, while yet he was in entire ignorance of the offence

<sup>1</sup> Answering to our indictment and plea. In this case the plea was, probably, what would be termed a plea to the jurisdiction of the original court; and this would require a precise statement of the nature of the offence, in order that it might be seen to which tribunal its decision rightly belonged.



with which he was charged, or whether, indeed, there were any; and should have sought the assistance of Agrippa, in order that by hearing the prisoner's own statement they might obtain information on the subject. That such a notion should be entertained by a Christian of the first, or early part of the second century, is natural enough; but that educated Englishmen or Europeans of the nineteenth century should repeat the absurdity, would be inexplicable, did we not know how difficult it is in all matters, and especially in religious, to escape from the traditional view.<sup>1</sup>

We are without information as to the manner in which Paul employed himself during the two years of his imprisonment at Casarea prior to the arrival of Festus, but we may suppose that he continued to maintain some supervision over the churches he had founded. It is singular that no letter written during this period has been preserved to us, though it can scarcely be doubted that there were many; for his enforced quietude would have afforded abundant leisure for the purpose, and the circumstances of these churches, reported to him from time to time by his friends, must have often demanded advice and exhortation. Perhaps, however, the true cause for wonder is, not that so many of his letters have perished, but that any should have been preserved, considering the perishable nature of the materials on which they were written, and the position of those to whom they were addressed. Still, it would seem that even then some written during this period might be expected to have been kept, and it would, consequently, be natural at first to refer to it one or more of the later Epistles. But, upon the whole, the tenor of these accords better with the hypothesis that they were written at

<sup>1</sup> The turn given to the incident by M. Renan is, perhaps, even more improbable. He supposes that Festus feigned ignorance in order that he might have an excuse for gratifying the curiosity of Agrippa. Surely no man in an official position which imposed knowledge as a duty could have done this, and the suggestion leaves untouched most of the difficulties. But M. Renan, while feeling the improbability of the story, and even suggesting that it may be fictitious, appears unable to free himself from the self-imposed necessity of following the Acts.

Rome. We are, therefore, absolutely without the means of judging what was the nature of his relations with the church at Cæsarea, or with that at Jerusalem; or in what manner his subsistence was provided for, and the good-will of his guards and of Felix conciliated. Nor do we know anything as to the efforts or success of the party that had been a short time previously so active in contesting his authority. But while we may believe that the fact of his being a prisoner for the sake of the cause might stimulate the zeal of his followers, and rouse them to unwonted exertions on his behalf, there can scarcely be a doubt that his removal from the scene, and his public submission to the terms imposed by the church at Jerusalem, would, in the great majority of churches, give the preponderance to his opponents. Nevertheless, that submission would alter their tone so far as they represented the Apostles, and would probably mitigate the vehemence of their attacks. We can see, however, by the Revelations and by the Clementines, how much personal bitterness still survived among those who professed to speak in the names of Peter and John; if, indeed, the former were not the work of John, and the latter founded upon a writing of Peter. And we may plausibly account for this upon the assumption that Peter was unable to forgive, not, perhaps, the contest at Antioch, but the manner in which he had been denounced to the whole Church as a timeserver and hypocrite; and that John retained the impression of the personal opposition he had encountered from Paul at Ephesus, kept alive by the circumstance that in most of the churches there was still a party that retained the obnoxious practices under the shelter of his name. But, judging from the tone of the later Epistle, it would certainly appear that he had no longer to complain of any organized opposition within the Church itself.

Within, probably, a month or six weeks after the hearing before Festus, Paul was sent, with other prisoners, to Rome, under the charge of Julius, "a centurion of the Augustan band." And after many delays and perils, and having narrowly escaped death

by shipwreck, he landed at Puteoli, where he was received by some brethren; and finally arrived at his destination. Here, we are told, he "remained two years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching them things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no man forbidding him." And with this ends all our information with regard to his life, excepting such few facts as we may gather from his letters; nor do we know whether he was acquitted or condemned; nor, in the former case, what were his movements or his destiny. Difficult, therefore, as our task has been up to this point, it becomes still more so for the future.

## CHAPTER XII.

### PAUL AT ROME, AND LETTERS OF CAPTIVITY.

Reception of Paul at Puteoli and Rome—Addresses the Jews at Rome—Inaccuracy of statements attributed to him—Turns to Gentiles—Preaches the Gospel—Unable personally to form a church at Rome, as in his lodging he could neither baptize nor celebrate Lord's Supper—Surrounded by friends—His imprisonment prevents any effectual influence over church at Rome—Converts chiefly slaves and freedmen—Letters to Colosse, Laodicea, and Philippi—That to Ephesians (so called) probably a circular letter—Difficulties with regard to last, not apparently insurmountable, but raising great doubts—Time and removal from personal conflicts would modify his views—Development of ideas with regard to nature of Jesus and his relation to powers of the air—God apparently not regarded as immediate Ruler of the world, but as acting through Christ—This view not fully developed or consistently expressed—Contrast not between flesh and spirit, but between kingdom of darkness and kingdom of God—Paul now speaks, not of "sin," but of sins—This change of expression, probably, not the result of change of opinions, but only of point of view—The question of the obligation of the Law appears to have lost its importance—This natural result of his submission to Church—Denunciation of teachers at Philippi—Impossible to accept Pastoral Epistles—Necessary to invent a whole series of incidents, for which there is no authority, in order to their reception—Epistle of Clement suggests that Paul visited Spain, but also that he was martyred there—Difficulty of forming estimate of Paul's character—His own writings the only evidence—Deductions to be made from his estimate of himself and his opponents—His character from point of view of his enemies and adherents—Probably the latter more nearly true.

As we have already pointed out, Paul on his arrival at Puteoli found a church there; for though only brethren are mentioned, it would be a matter of course that they possessed the necessary organization for the initiation of members and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. We know nothing of its founders, or of its position, or of the number of its members; and we should have been ignorant of its very existence, but for the circumstance of Paul having landed at the place. We are told that the brethren received Paul gladly, and besought

him to remain with them for a week—a request with which he is represented as complying. This, however, is one of the instances which show the untrustworthiness of the writer—his misrepresentation, if he were one of the party, or his misconception, if he compiled his work from older documents; not, perhaps, as to the fact related, but as to the cause and connection of events. We may believe that the party, including Paul, did stay a week at Puteoli; for there might be many circumstances to induce such a delay. But we may be quite certain that the centurion did not regulate his movements, or stay the march of the escort for so long a period, or at all, out of deference to the wishes of the obscure, possibly servile, brethren of the place, or of one out of the many prisoners whom he was conveying to Rome. His duty was to carry them on with no other delays than such as were imposed by the necessities of the case; and, to say nothing of his own habits of obedience, Roman discipline was too strict and too rigidly enforced to allow him to dream of violating this duty.

At Rome, again, Paul is received by brethren, who, having heard of his expected arrival, come forth to meet him at the last stage of his journey. These, presumably, were the persons for whom his letter had been specially designed; since, although addressed to all the saints, it would be delivered in the first instance to selected individuals, to whom would be entrusted the duty of bringing it before the church. Or it might be that, under the circumstances, the whole body would deem it right to join in giving a welcome to a brother who had been sent to Rome to answer an accusation made by the Sadducee rulers of Jerusalem. As all our information with regard to the Roman church leads to the inference that it belonged originally to the Judæo-Christian party, who had not fully forgiven Paul, the former supposition is, antecedently, the more probable. And yet the manner in which the incident is described, and the effect it produced upon Paul, which seem to imply that the reception was unexpected, may perhaps be taken to indicate the latter. The



meeting did not, apparently, delay the march of the escort by whom Paul was taken to the Prætorium, and delivered into the custody of the Prefect; not, of course, personally, but to some subordinate charged with the custody of prisoners. The Prætorian Prefect, one of the highest officers of the Empire, would have no more direct concern with the reception and guardianship of ordinary prisoners than an English high-sheriff has now. In the Prætorium, Paul had the unusual indulgence of being permitted to live in a priest's house—hired for his use—implying, it may be, a favourable report from Festus, but, more probably, only that the nature of the charge was not such as to disentitle him to the indulgence, and that he had the funds that would be required to pay for the accommodation. The latter certainly must have been the case; and they had been, doubtless, supplied by some of his disciples.

On being settled in his new residence, he is described as having almost immediately sent for the chief of the Jews—having, indeed, authoritatively “called them together;” and they, at the summons of a prisoner of whom they have never even heard, leave their affairs and repair to the Prætorium. On their arrival, Paul addresses them, vindicating himself from the charge of having done anything against either the people or their customs, and asserting that he was then in prison for the hope of Israel. These assertions obtain for him an opportunity at a subsequent time of obtaining a larger audience, who visit him for the purpose of learning from his mouth the nature of the new doctrines, of which till then they had been ignorant. He addresses them at great length, and they listen, apparently, with patience and interest. We are not told what were the arguments employed, or what evidence was offered in proof of the resurrection of Jesus; but we are told that some were convinced of the truth of his statements, though some still disbelieved. In spite, however, of this auspicious commencement of his labours, Paul makes the circumstance that all are not convinced at this one interview of the truth of a doctrine which contradicted all they had been

taught as sacred, and of a fact so exceptional as the raising of Jesus from the dead, a ground for denouncing the whole assembly in the language of Isaiah, as having wilfully closed the avenues by which the truth might reach them, and declares his intention of turning to the Gentiles !

We may be permitted to doubt the accuracy of the story thus told, even in the interests of Paul himself ; for if it were accurate, it would be impossible to acquit him of falsehood and dishonesty. How could he say that he had been delivered a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans, when the Romans had rescued him from a Jewish mob, or from a Jewish tribunal ? or that the Romans would have let him go, but that, on account of the protest of the Jews against his liberation, he was compelled to appeal to Cæsar, where Festus had proposed, not to free him, but to send (or take) him to Jerusalem to be tried there, and his appeal was intended to prevent this result ? and, above all, how could he say that he had committed nothing against the customs of his fathers, when he had been everywhere teaching that they were valueless and worse ; or that he was bound with that chain for the hope of Israel, when he had, in his letter to the brethren in Rome, spoken of the exclusion of Israel as a class, only a remnant being saved ? If the speech is truly reported, Paul must forfeit all claim to belief, and we can no longer attribute any value to his assertions or denials ; for what he says to the Galatians and the Corinthians, though confirmed by an oath, can be entitled to no more credit than what he says here to the Jews of Rome. But even if the writer may be supposed to have been present at the interview, and thus to relate what he himself had heard, we may question his truthfulness, remembering upon how many previous occasions he has omitted incidents that would conflict with the impression he designs to produce, and how he has, apparently, coloured and modified those which he has introduced. We are not, perhaps, entitled to reject the whole story of the interview, though it is full of improbabilities as it stands ; for policy might lead Paul to attempt to conciliate his country-

men, and to pay them the compliment of offering to explain to them, in the first instance, the grounds upon which he preached Jesus as the Messiah; or he might have felt it his duty in every new place to offer the Gospel first to them. We may, however, regard the speech as the invention of the writer, and as only expressing what appeared to himself to harmonize with the picture he had drawn of the position and conduct of the Apostle.

Doubtless it may be said, in answer to this, that if the writer might colour the speech so as to make it agree with his object, so Paul might colour the facts for a similar purpose. And it may be urged that, having to address persons who knew nothing of the circumstances that had led to his being sent a prisoner to Rome, he felt himself at liberty to give such a version of the transaction as would predispose them to listen to his doctrines without being repelled by any prejudice against himself; that it was, after all, only becoming a Jew to Jews; that his primary object being to win souls, the mere accuracy of his statements with regard to facts that had no bearing upon this matter was altogether immaterial; and that we have no right to reject direct and positive testimony merely because it imputes to Paul conduct inconsistent with the view we have chosen to take of his character. And if we were to regard the report of his speech as the work of Luke—an eye-witness of the scene, writing, as the current theory assumes, while the matter was fresh in his recollection—these arguments would possess much force. If, however, we regard it as the composition of a later compiler, or even of Luke, writing many years afterwards, then we are entitled to believe that if Paul did obtain an interview with the leading Jews, he told them nothing but the truth.

It may be open to apologists to suggest that these expressions of Paul are not to be weighed too nicely; that in speaking of being delivered to the Romans, he was looking rather to the actual result of the conduct of the Jews, which, though without design on their part, and, indeed, contrary to their wishes, did lead to his imprisonment, and to his being compelled to appeal

to Cæsar; and that he forgot or passed over the means by which these results were brought about; and that in asserting that he had committed nothing against their ancestral customs, he was confining himself to the scene in the Temple, and overlooked for the time his teaching and conduct among his Gentile converts. Such an apology, however, is almost excluded by the language he employs, and, if accepted, though it might partially vindicate him from the charge of intentional deception, it destroys altogether the value of any statements he might make. If the scene with Peter at Antioch, and Paul's own conduct and words on that occasion, as described in his letter to the Galatians, bore no greater resemblance to the real transaction than his present account of the manner in which he became a prisoner, and of his conduct in relation to the Jewish customs bore to the actual facts, it is obvious that we could draw no safe conclusions as to the nature of the dispute and the conduct of the parties. And a corresponding doubt must rest upon all his assertions; for there would not only be the disturbing influence of excited feeling, but an habitual inaccuracy of thought and statement.

Having thus finally turned from the Jews,<sup>1</sup> Paul, we are told, began to address himself to the Gentiles, receiving all who came to him, and, of course, preaching to them. It is even possible that he might have had occasional opportunities of being present at meetings of the brethren, when he would certainly be called upon to speak; for the same means that procured him the privilege of residing in his own hired house, might also be able to procure him the privilege of short excursions under the charge of the soldier to whom he was supposed to be chained.<sup>2</sup> We learn

<sup>1</sup> Unless we suppose him to have visited Spain, in which case he would, no doubt, have followed his practice of preaching to them in the first instance.

<sup>2</sup> We know so little of the precise circumstances in which he was placed, of the real nature of his imprisonment, and of the relaxations that might be permitted to prisoners to whom no special importance was attached, that we have no right to exclude this possibility. Probably a large portion of the income of the inferior officers, and a noticeable part even of that of the Prefect, was derived from fees paid by prisoners; and if such were the case, we may be sure that money would purchase indulgences which the nominal regulations of the service forbade. Paul, it is true, talks of his bonds

from his letters that there were sometimes dissensions in the Church, but that, notwithstanding, the new doctrines continued to be propagated, gaining adherents in the palace of Nero, and, apparently, among the soldiers of the guard. And we see that he is surrounded by friends who devote themselves to his service; some acting as messengers, conveying his letters to various churches, and bringing to him intelligence as to their condition and the manner in which his letters were received; and some ministering to his necessities, and assisting and consoling him in his many labours and trials. If we could accept the letters to Timothy as genuine, we should further learn that some who at first were zealous in his service, became gradually weary of the constant drain upon their time and resources; or, it may be, were repelled by the temper he displayed in controversy, or were unable to submit to his perpetual dictation; and they are, accordingly, reproached as loving the present world. It is quite possible that desertions of this sort may have occurred; but in the letters written during this imprisonment—his first imprisonment, according to some writers, but more probably the only one—there is no reference to any such desertion. The letters hint, indeed, at opposition and division; but none of his friends appear to be implicated; rather, their adherence and fidelity console him in the midst of his many troubles.

We picture Paul, therefore, during this period of his life, as living in all the comfort which the rules with regard to prisoners will permit. He has a separate dwelling, and enjoys the fullest opportunities of receiving his friends and converts; and he is able to maintain a correspondence with the various churches founded by himself or by his followers. He is permitted, too, without hindrance, to preach Jesus the Christ to all who can be brought to listen to him. These costly privileges, for such

and his chain, but this may be only a rhetorical description of the fact that he was a prisoner. The officer charged with his custody would have to answer to the Prefect for any escape, probably with his life; but he could always secure himself against the risk, and it would only enhance the price to be paid for any indulgence.



they must have been, we suppose were secured to him by the liberality of some of his wealthier converts, notably those of the church at Philippi; though the language in which he recognizes their gifts appears to show that they did not stand alone in this respect.<sup>1</sup>

It is obvious, however, that whatever might be his activity and zeal, his sphere of labour must have been confined within very narrow limits. Although, as we have suggested, it is possible that he might sometimes be permitted to attend a meeting of the church, these occasions must have been very infrequent. He would, therefore, be only imperfectly aware of the doctrines taught; which, moreover, whatever they might be, he could neither restrain nor effectually counteract. We have only to suppose a prisoner living in the neighbourhood of the barracks at Kensington, and permitted but at rare intervals (if at all) to leave his prison, and then under the closest supervision, to see how little power he would have of watching over the ramifications of a society recruited from among the lower classes in all parts of London, and how unable he would be to control their movements. This difficulty would be also the greater if, as was the case here, the society had been previously fully organized under duly appointed officers. Probably—almost certainly, indeed—the development of the church at Rome, or, perhaps, the churches—for it is possible, considering the numbers of the population, and the size of the city and its suburbs, that there were by this time more than one—proceeded independently under the same authority as before his arrival. The regular meetings for worship, and for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and the initiation of members, would, as a matter of course, continue to be held at the accustomed place, and be presided over by the regular officers; and he could very seldom be present at any. And even his converts, unless they had formed a separate church

<sup>1</sup> The reference to them (Phil. iv. 14 ff.) as being the *only* church that ministered to his necessities in Macedonia, seems to admit that they were not the *only* church on other occasions.

from the beginning, would at once, by the mere fact of joining any one of the churches, pass from under his sole direction.

It would be natural, at first sight, to suppose that the converts made by Paul did form a separate church, with distinct officers; and that they would commence by holding their meetings at his lodgings, and afterwards, when their numbers increased, at some convenient place in the neighbourhood. In this case, he would have presided at the meetings originally, and afterwards one or other of the brethren who were attached to him—Timothy, Tychicus, Luke, Demas, and others—would have taken his place. But there are difficulties in the way of such a conclusion, especially as regards the two essential Christian rites, baptism and the Lord's Supper. We can scarcely imagine that the necessary conveniences for the performance of the former ceremony could be provided in his lodgings; and if they could, the presence of the soldier to whom Paul was chained would have been an insuperable bar in both cases, since he would thus have been put in possession of the secret rites and formula of the sect, their mysterious credo and their modes of recognition, which he could publish to the world. And even if it be supposed that the chaining was merely nominal, we can hardly imagine that the officers of the guard would permit the celebration of mysteries from which they were excluded, in the house of a prisoner. It is probable, therefore, that the labours of Paul during his imprisonment were limited to preaching and exhortation, and that whatever was done towards forming a church from among his converts, was done by his followers, and not by himself. He might sow the seed, but others must watch over and foster its growth.

We have no means of estimating the number of his converts; but it is probable they were chiefly, if not exclusively, of servile condition or of servile origin. Very few, indeed, above that class would be brought into contact with him, or be persuaded by his teaching. If any of higher rank should chance to hear that a prisoner from Judæa was preaching some new faith, and be led

by curiosity to visit his lodging, they would be as little likely to be convinced of the resurrection of Jesus as the Athenians are reported to have been; though, like them, they might listen approvingly to his proclamation of the Divine Unity; and even, in view of the actual condition of the Empire, to his prediction of the speedy consummation of all things. But the names of his converts, whoever they were, have perished; and his preaching left no trace upon either the doctrine or organization of the church of Rome. Whatever influence he exerted came in at a later time, and as the result of his writings; and it has always been small.

During his imprisonment at Rome, Paul addressed, it is presumed, letters to three churches at least—those of Colosse, Laodicea, and Philippi. It is sometimes supposed that the second of these was that which we now possess under the name of the letter to the Ephesians, though that opinion can scarcely be accepted; and if it is not, then he appears to have written a fourth, though we do not know to what church it was addressed.<sup>1</sup> If, however, we adopt the ordinary opinion, that this fourth Epistle was addressed to the church at Ephesus, we must also, it would seem, conclude that it was not written by Paul, since it appears impossible that he should have employed such language<sup>2</sup> in writing to a church with which he had been so intimately connected, or have refrained from a single expression of personal knowledge or personal regard; or that he should have omitted to salute even one of those brethren who had for two years stood by his side in his daily disputations, who had obeyed his summons to meet him at Miletus, and who had afterwards remained faithful to his cause. Imprisonment must, indeed, have changed him, before such reticence could have been possible. But if we suppose that the letter was intended for some church known to him only by report, and probably for more than one such church,

<sup>1</sup> It seems certain that the words, "at Ephesus," Eph. i. 1, were not in the oldest manuscripts.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. i. 15, iii. 1, iv. 17, &c.

this difficulty is removed. Even then, however, great doubts would seem to rest upon it; for it is not easy to understand how it could happen that in writing to churches where he had not taught, and which he was addressing for the first time, there should be so little of what we are accustomed to regard as his distinctive teaching, or how the questions which occupied so prominent a position in previous letters should receive so little attention in this. And when we add the difference in style in this letter as compared with those to the Colossians and Philippians, and still more with his earlier letters, it must be admitted that there are, *prima facie*, sufficient grounds for questioning its authenticity.

Yet it must be remembered that, so far as the topics dwelt upon are concerned, similar doubts attach to the letters to the Philippians and Colossians, the genuineness of both of which has, indeed, been denied on that account; but the former of which, at any rate, appears to be as distinctively Pauline as any one of those attributed to him. We do not profess to dwell upon resemblances or distinctions of style; but the character of the writer, as deduced from the spirit of the Epistle, is precisely that of Paul as exhibited in former letters. This was, probably, the last written of the three letters; and we see there how the mere circumstance of a personal opposition to his teaching, or it may be only of teaching doctrines which differed from his own, warps his judgment, and rekindles much of his old bitterness of temper and language.<sup>1</sup> He cannot admit that the different form in which the obligations of the Christian profession were conceived and set forth by those whom he accuses of preaching Christ of envy and contention, might arise from conscientious conviction. He treats it as intended only to increase the difficulties of his own position. And in the same spirit he assumes that it is his bonds which have emboldened the brethren to speak the word without fear. When, too, he comes to warn his readers against "false teachers," he breaks out into something of his

<sup>1</sup> Phil. i. 14, 15, 16, iii. 2 ff.

former vehemence of denunciation, and couples this with a description of his own claims to glory in the flesh, which strikingly recalls his "boastings" to the Corinthians. These are traits which a later forger would hardly be likely to have attempted to reproduce. In a less degree, similar remarks may be made with regard to the letter to the Colossians; and the difference which exists between these two may be partly attributable to the circumstance that Paul in this letter is not writing to persons whom he has known, or to a church which he has founded.

It is probable that the objections to the letter to the Ephesians (for we may speak of it by the name by which it is generally known), founded upon its relation to that to the Colossians, of which it is often said to be a weak and rhetorical amplification, may arise only from our altered standpoint. What appear to a modern critic to be marks of inferiority, were probably regarded at the time as the very opposite; as they no doubt still are by a large majority of those who read the two Epistles. And Paul himself may not have been above the weakness of preferring the artificial to the natural, and of thinking that his ordinary style was too simple, and would be improved by elaboration. It is not uncommon with great writers that they value their works by the toil expended upon them; while in many cases posterity has reversed their judgment, and has prized those most which have been least laboured. If, therefore, on re-perusing the letter to the Colossians, Paul had been satisfied with the general view that it presented of the nature of Jesus, and of his relation to God and to the believer, and to the powers of the air, and of the duties which admission into the Church imposed upon the brethren, it would be quite probable that when he contemplated addressing churches that were unknown to him, he might make it the basis of a more careful composition, which, as he believed, would better express his ideas; and might exclude topics that were calculated to excite prejudice against his teaching.

There do not, consequently, appear any conclusive reasons for



rejecting the Epistle to the Ephesians upon the ground either of its style or its contents, though great doubts attach to it. And it would be only natural that time and reflection should produce some change in the views of the Apostle. The relative importance of the same topics will appear in a very different light during the excitement of controversy, and in the period of calm that supervenes when the controversy is at an end. More than three years had, probably, elapsed between writing the letter to the Romans and that to the Colossians, and during this time Paul had been completely withdrawn from personal collision with his opponents in the society, and had been thrown back upon himself. Apart, therefore, from the change in his position consequent upon his submission to the Church, there was the sobering influence of solitude and reflection to diminish his hostility to the Law; and there was also the effect of prolonged meditation upon the person and work of Christ to elevate and enlarge the views that he had formed of his nature. He had now leisure for the formation of theories with regard to the relation of Christ and the Church to the inferior powers, whether good or evil, who ruled the earth and the air. Speculations of this kind might be put aside by the exigencies of a busy life, while he was preaching, writing, disputing, and travelling; but they would be a natural occupation for the mind during the long months of his captivity. Obviously, Paul must have largely shared the ideas of his contemporaries with regard to the existence and influence of both good and evil powers. He did not conceive of Jehovah as the immediate Creator of the world, or as its actual Ruler. God was, no doubt, the ultimate Cause of everything, and the supreme Power of the universe; but He exercised His functions as Creator and Ruler by the instrumentality of agents; and His government was resisted by inferior spirits. With these He did not strive directly—presumably, because it was impossible for Him to have any relation to that which was evil. The past ages of the world, with their half-knowledge on the part of the Jews, and their utter ignorance on that of the

Gentiles,<sup>1</sup> and with the sins which were their consequence, had been suffered by Him; but now that the fulness of the time was come, He had sent forth His Son to reconcile the world to Himself, and then to subdue every hostile principle and reduce it to obedience. And after this consummation, there being no more evil, He would assume, or perhaps resume, the direct government of the heavens and the earth.

Such, at least, appear to be substantially his views of the position which God occupied in relation to the world, and of the manner in which evil was to be ultimately vanquished. But his statements on the subject are not always consistent. Sometimes he describes God as being in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world unto Himself, and sometimes as personally delivering believers from the power of darkness, and bringing them into the kingdom of Christ. Paul, apparently, had never been compelled or induced to define his views upon these points, or to draw them out into a system, as had been partially the case with regard to the Law; and it is probable that they continued to the last to be fluctuating and unformed.

Similar views to these may be traced in the earlier Epistles, though in them they are secondary to the question of the means of salvation, and the obligation and sufficiency of the Law. In the same manner also his doctrines with regard to justification by faith appear to be contained in these later, though occupying a subordinate place, and brought down from the mystical height to which they had been formerly raised.

The opposition which Paul sets forth in the letters of the captivity is not between the Law and faith, nor between the flesh and the spirit, but between the kingdom of darkness, or of the prince of this world, and that of God or of Christ. The æon of the world,—the prince of the power of the air, notwithstanding the death of Christ, is the ruler of all who, not having entered the Church, are still children of disobedience or of wrath, and his spirit works in them. But believers,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Acts xvii. 30.

though originally in the same condition,<sup>1</sup> have been translated into the kingdom of Christ by their baptism, in which rite, after their profession of faith, they had been buried and raised with him; and this translation is the work of God. Thenceforth they form part of the mystical body of which Christ is the head, partaking of his life as they have partaken of his death—a death to sin and the world, and a life to God and holiness. Christ is the actual likeness of God; the complete fullness of the Divinity dwells in him; he sits at the right hand of God in heaven;<sup>2</sup> and believers partake of his fullness, having even now, by virtue of their union with him, a share in his heavenly state. They are, therefore, to offer no worship to the various powers of the heavens or the air, for these are impotent to help. It is only through Christ, and by means of an union with him, that man can approach God. Such worship, too, would be a wilful humiliation, since all of these powers were originally created by Christ, with whom the saints are identified, sharing in his nature and his dignity, and therefore the superiors of the beings they are called upon to adore.

And there appears to be a further change in the language. Paul speaks in these letters, not of sin, but of sins; not of the sinful nature, but of the sinful practices, of the believers prior to their baptism. They were dead in trespasses and sins, disobedient children who had provoked the wrath of God; but now having put off the body of their sins by their burial with Christ, God has pardoned their transgressions and given them life. They were alienated and hostile by wicked works; but now they have redemption through the blood of Christ, who has broken down the barrier which formerly excluded them as Gentiles from

<sup>1</sup> Eph. ii. 2, 9; comp. v. 6, "children of unbelief." Not, of course, that they were the offspring of disobedience, or of wrath, or of unbelief, but that they exhibited these qualities.

<sup>2</sup> When Paul is cited as a witness to the actual bodily resurrection and ascension of Jesus, it is apparently forgotten that his language implies that God has a human form, and is restricted to a definite locality. If it is to be interpreted figuratively in one case, it ought to be so equally in the other.

the knowledge and love of God, and has thus enabled them to have access to Him upon equal terms with the children of the covenant. Formerly they were subject to the power of evil, but now they are free from this subjection, and they are to show their freedom in Christ by being holy and unblameable. In these and similar expressions we appear to see an alteration in his conception of the nature of the change which takes place in believers, as compared with that we should deduce from the Epistle to the Romans; but it is possible that the difference between the two is more apparent than real, answering only to a change in the point of view from which the subject is regarded. There is, indeed, always a risk of exaggerating apparent differences of this nature in the writings of Paul, resulting from what we may almost term the intense vitality of his language, which tends to fix attention rather upon his words than upon the ideas he is endeavouring to convey. Although, therefore, the figures he employs vary with the occasion and object of writing, it is possible that his fundamental idea may have been the same throughout. And he may have intended only to enforce the fact, that the best men invariably fell below their ideal, and that although the worst might have aspirations after purity and virtue, yet that these did not prevent them from shameful violations even of the laws which they acknowledged; and that there were no other means of procuring pardon for past, and freedom from future sins, excepting an entrance into the Church of Christ.

But, perhaps, the most noticeable change is in his tone in relation to the Law. He writes to Gentiles only, and he writes as though their freedom from its observance were an admitted fact. It is implied, indeed, that there are still persons who solicit them to practise certain abstinences or observances;<sup>1</sup> but Paul does not feel it needful to dwell upon the subject. He contents himself with a mere reference to the fact that his readers have been made perfect in Christ,<sup>2</sup> or that they have died in Christ to the elements of the world, so that these mere bodily

<sup>1</sup> Col. ii. 16; Phil. iii. 2, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. iii. 15.

observances are immaterial ; for as the things with which they are concerned are perishable—made to be consumed in the using—their use can have no permanent effect on believers. This argument has more than once in the Church been found capable of a perilous application to mere bodily transgressions, in which it is assumed that the spirit has no share.<sup>1</sup> But beyond these brief references, nothing is said on the subject. These letters, also, imply just such a condition of the Church, so far as concerns the obligations of Gentiles towards the Law, as we should infer from the Revelations,<sup>2</sup> and from the speech attributed to James at his final interview with Paul. And it may even be conjectured that, in his letter to the Colossians, Paul is availing himself of this admitted liberty to urge even further freedom, and that the decrees which they are reproved for observing were those decrees which he and Silas had delivered to the brethren when they went through the cities in their journey from Antioch to the Troad.<sup>3</sup> Both Colosse and Laodicea had, we must suppose, been evangelized by followers of Paul during his period of conflict, when he was, apparently, teaching the essential indifference of eating meat offered to idols, on the ground of the nothingness of the idol. The churches in both cities might have accepted this teaching, and afterwards, when Paul had been for so long a time withdrawn from the neighbourhood, might have been disposed to yield to the solicitations of those who wished to enforce a complete abstinence from such meats under all circumstances. It is clear from the Revelations that this question was still hotly contested, and Paul might think it desirable to show that his convictions were still unchanged, and to encourage the brethren to a resolute assertion of their Christian freedom. We see, however, that in the letter to the Ephesians the topic is not introduced. The whole subject of the Law, and of meats and drinks, and days and times, is passed over in silence, as though

<sup>1</sup> Col. ii. 20 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. ii. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xiv. 4 : “τα δογματα.” Col. ii. 20 : “τι — δοματοζεσθε.”



such questions had no interest for those whom he is addressing. We may, therefore, infer that, though in writing to specific churches which had been evangelized by himself or by his followers, Paul might feel himself entitled to warn them against submitting their liberty in Christ to formal restraints or observances of whatever kind, he did not deem such warnings advisable in a letter intended for general use. But it is obvious that, from whatever cause, the questions which, during his last missionary journey, had appeared to be of primary importance, occupying the foremost place in his writings, have now become quite secondary.

This change appears intelligible, if we suppose the origin and results of the contest between Paul and the representatives of the Apostles to have been such as we have suggested. For then the circumstance that Paul had publicly conceded the point in dispute by admitting that the Law was still binding upon Jews, notwithstanding their baptism into the name of Jesus, would remove all ground for raising any question on the subject. And, as we have suggested, it is possible that this concession on his part was accompanied by an understanding that the freedom conceded to the Gentiles should be more scrupulously respected. The Jewish brother would still be subject to the Law, and would continue its practice, retaining whatever advantages that practice involved, but the Gentile would be free. And as there was no attempt to depreciate the obligations of the Law on one side, so there would be no attempt to extend them on the other. Gentile converts might, indeed, be still solicited by some brother, more zealous than discreet, to advance to a higher degree in the Church, or in the Christian profession, by becoming a proselyte of righteousness; but, even if such attempts were not discouraged, it would be distinctly understood that their profession involved no obligation of the kind; but that they were full members of the Church by baptism. The letter to the Philippians, as we have seen, contains warnings against some unknown

persons, who are called "the dogs,"<sup>1</sup> "the evil workers," and "the concision," and who were probably Jewish brethren recommending full obedience to the Law. They, if aware of the language which Paul had employed, would, no doubt, have retorted it with equal violence and coarseness, and would have disclaimed all intention of imposing the Law upon any who were unwilling, though they would probably have urged that something was to be gained by its adoption. They might even argue that what was right in the case of Paul himself, though it might be needless, could not be injurious in the case of his followers. But we see that freedom from the yoke of the Law was the recognized right of Gentiles, and that though submission might be recommended as desirable, it could not be imposed as essential. And from this time there is no hint in early Christian literature that anything is required of them beyond obedience to the decrees of the Council at Jerusalem.

With the despatch of the last of these letters ends all that we know of the position and labours of Paul from himself; for it appears impossible to accept the Pastoral Epistles as genuine. We do not dwell upon the arguments that have been drawn from their style and language, from the picture they draw of the state of the Church, and from the questions with which they deal; these, perhaps, might be susceptible of explanation if we could find a period in the career of Paul in which to insert them. But it appears impossible to refer them to any time within the limits embraced in the Acts. This, we think, has been shown conclusively by M. Renan; and it is admitted by Messrs. Conybeare and Howson, in common with, apparently, the majority of orthodox critics. In order to maintain their authenticity, we must, consequently, assume that, after his liberation from his Roman imprisonment, Paul "was travelling at liberty in Ephesus, Crete, Macedonia, Miletus, and Nicopolis, and that he was afterwards a second time a prisoner at Rome." And besides this, we must

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Tertullian: "canes quos foras Apostolus expellit, latrantes in deum veritatis." Adv. Marc. ii. 5, quoted in "Supernatural Religion."

find time for a journey to Spain. If the letters bore marks of genuineness, or if the incidents to which they refer were confirmed by independent testimony, we might accept the incidents on the faith of the letters, or, conversely, the letters as harmonizing with the incidents. But it is too much to ask us to accept as historical a series of events which are absolutely without a shadow of corroboration from independent sources, upon the faith of letters which are themselves exposed to the gravest suspicion.

It has been argued that there is a concurrence of Patristic testimony to the fact of Paul's liberation and second imprisonment, and to his having journeyed to Spain. And there is no doubt such a concurrence,<sup>1</sup> though it depends entirely upon a statement made in the Epistle (so called) of Clement, written, probably,<sup>2</sup> near the close of the first century, or within about thirty years of the supposed event; and that Epistle mentions neither Spain nor a second imprisonment. The next authority in order of date is the Muratori fragment, about A.D. 170, and even that is silent as to any second imprisonment. And though the phrase employed in the Epistle of Clement<sup>3</sup> may mean that Paul went to the extremity of the West, which to a Roman would have been Spain; yet this is not necessarily its meaning. For the passage, and, indeed, the whole chapter, in which it occurs, is not history, but rhetoric. The object of the writer in speaking of Paul is not to inform the Corinthians of a fact of which, if the letter were written before the close of the first century, they were probably as well informed as he, but to

<sup>1</sup> "This apparent weight of testimony, however, is much weakened by our knowledge of the facility with which unhistoric legends originate, especially when they fall in with the wishes of those among whom they circulate." (Conybeare and Howson: *Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, Appendix iv.) The difference between the opinion thus expressed, and the value which the writers elsewhere attach to similar traditions, is, that the one class can apparently be made to support orthodox conclusions, while the other is urged in support of the Romish claim to have had Peter for the first Bishop of Rome.

<sup>2</sup> Though, after all, this is very doubtful.

<sup>3</sup> Και (επι) το τέρμα τῆς δύσεως εἰθων.

warn them against the consequences of indulging in a spirit of envy. With this view he describes the fate of Peter, and then proceeds to contrast the labours of Paul with the fate which he suffered; and he attributes both to envy. We are, therefore, entitled to expect some rhetorical amplification; and it is quite possible he might mean no more than that Paul, having preached both in the East and in the West, had arrived at the term of his Western labours when he bore witness before the magistrates, whether by martyrdom or otherwise.

It may, however, be admitted that the natural meaning to us, who know nothing upon the subject excepting from this passage, is, that Paul did visit Spain. But then it would be equally natural to suppose that it was there he was martyred; and this, though not explicitly stated, appears to be implied in the language. But neither this passage nor the Muratori fragment lends the smallest support to the idea that he had revisited the East before his martyrdom. In order to obtain any support to that view, it is necessary to assume the very matter in question—the authenticity of the Pastoral Epistles; for Eusebius does not mention such a visit; and the two other authorities cited, Chrysostom and Jerome, speak, the one of a journey to Spain, and the other of Paul having been liberated by Nero, in order that he might preach the Gospel in the West.<sup>1</sup> Looking, then, at the authorities, it does appear that there was an early tradition (though of very uncertain authority) that Paul had carried out his declared intention of visiting Spain, and this would imply that he had been freed from his imprisonment; but that there was no such tradition with regard to the place of his martyrdom; and no tradition whatever as to having revisited the regions in which he had first preached the Gospel. In default of such tradition, we have a right to oppose to the Pastoral Epistles the express language attributed to Paul in taking leave of the

<sup>1</sup> Conybeare and Howson: *Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, Notes to chap. xxvii. Chrysostom, though annotating 2 Tim. iv. 20, admits that he knows nothing of Paul's return to the East.

Ephesian elders. We do not argue that he could not have made a false prophecy; but it appears impossible that the author of the Acts, who must have known his future fate, would have put into his mouth language which his readers knew to have been falsified by the event.

Here, then, ends all our knowledge of the life and labours of Paul. And we know nothing as to his fate. The legend of his martyrdom at Rome is entitled to no weight whatever; for it first appears at a time when numerous apocryphal stories were current, and when no one dreamed of investigating their foundation. His appeal to the Emperor may have been unsuccessful, and he may have been sentenced to exile in Sardinia, or in some other penal settlement, or to death. If we were to draw any inference from the silence of the author of the Acts, it would be that he was not set free; for had he finally triumphed over his Jewish accusers, we should expect to find some intimation of the fact. But if he were once liberated, there can be no adequate ground for supposing that he would have returned to Rome. And least of all can we imagine, with a recent writer,<sup>1</sup> that he visited Alexandria and other cities which subsequently became centres of Christian life, and laid the foundation of Gentile Christianity in those places. He passes absolutely from our sight; and all that we can venture to say is, that during the remainder of his life—probably a very brief period—he preached the Gospel wherever he had an opportunity, and that he died in the full belief that he should almost immediately re-appear on earth with Christ at his coming.

It is not easy to form a true conception of the character of Paul; for we really know nothing on the subject, excepting from the brief notices which he has himself furnished; and these are, for the most part, incidental. The Acts gives us, no doubt, many details as to his external history. It tells in what places he taught, what opposition he provoked from the enemies of the Gospel, and what sufferings he endured from them; but it

<sup>1</sup> The author of "Paul of Tarsus."



nowhere touches upon those aspects of his teaching and practice which provoked hostility in the Church; nor does it enable us to estimate his conduct in the disputes which his pretensions excited. We are compelled, therefore, to judge of him exclusively from his own writings.

Thus judged, it is obvious that some deduction will have to be made from the description he has given both of himself and of his opponents. We can see quite enough of his habitual tone of feeling to inspire a distrust of his judgment. A man who can term his adversaries dogs, hypocrites, evil workers, false Apostles, deacons of Satan,—can accuse them of making a god of their belly and glorying in their shame,—and can curse them only because their views of the obligations of the Law differed from his own,—is obviously not a man whose estimate we can accept in judging of their motives or conduct. His statement of his own proceedings and feelings must also be subject to a corresponding doubt. If, in the face of the fierce anathemas in his letter to the churches in Galatia, he could speak of himself as blessing where he was reviled, it is obvious that there was some lack of self-knowledge, or some suppression of the truth. And if the passage is only intended to describe the ideal at which he aimed, and to which he endeavoured to conform his practice, the grievous contrast between effort and performance in this particular suggests that there might be a corresponding contrast in others also. The same excited feeling that caused him to see the acts of his foes, or those whom he considered such, through a distorted medium, would produce a similar distortion of vision in reference to his own. It was not merely that he felt he did well to be angry, but that he could scarcely do otherwise than exaggerate the importance of his opinions and labours; arrogating to himself the entire results of the missions in which his colleagues had borne their part, and assuming an infallibility which contrasts strangely with the emphatic contradiction that his leading dogma has received from the course of events. For eighteen centuries

have elapsed, and the Son of Man has not yet been manifested in the clouds of heaven.

Although, however, a dispassionate examination of his writings should show that his statements ought to be received with some reserve,<sup>1</sup> it is almost impossible to escape the influence of his marvellous power of style. He seems so frank and confident—there is such an apparent outpouring of his most secret thoughts and feelings—such an absence of reserve or caution—such fire and eloquence in some parts, and such touching pathos in others—that we yield ourselves to their charm unconsciously, and almost without the power of resistance, and see everything in the precise light which he has chosen. And yet, perhaps, our experience might teach us that such characteristics are no guarantees of accuracy or impartiality, and that they are often associated with habits of thought altogether incompatible with these qualities. And such may have been the case with Paul.

It would be easy to draw a picture of the career of the Apostle from the standpoint of his enemies, or from his own. We might picture him as having accepted from the Jewish authorities a trust which he betrayed—having been befriended by Barnabas, with whom he quarrelled because his attempts at dictation were resisted—having been received into the Church by Peter, whom he afterwards opposed and vilified—having agreed to a decree of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, which he afterwards systematically violated—having pretended to be still a Jew, and claimed the privileges of one, while he was a renegade to the Law—having sought to force himself into an equality with the Apostles on the ground of pretended visions and revelations, and then, when this attempt was defeated, having sought to purchase recognition by money which his Gentile converts supplied—greedy of lucre, a rebel against lawful authority, and

<sup>1</sup> Is it quite certain even that we are entitled to disbelieve the report of his later speeches in the Acts on account of their misrepresentations and concealments? Comp. 2 Cor. ix. 1—5.

teaching doctrines which were a cloak for immorality. And, probably, we might introduce darker traits even than these. Or, on the other hand, we might depict him as the sincere Pharisee, inspired by an earnest zeal for his religion to persecute the Church; then, as the penitent convert to whom Christ had appeared, and in whom God had revealed His Son, that he should preach him to the Gentiles, and who immediately counted all things but dross that he might know Christ; then, as the fervid and uncompromising preacher of the Gospel among the Jews, enduring persecutions at their hand which more than once endangered his life; then, as received by the chief of the Apostles, and subsequently preaching to the Gentiles with such success, that the three leaders of the Church resigned to himself and Barnabas the whole Gentile world; then, as defying the authority of the Church, first in the case of Titus and afterwards in that of the dispute at Antioch, in order that he might secure to Gentiles freedom from the yoke of the Law, and continuing the contest until his object was attained; and, finally, as witnessing a good confession by martyrdom at Rome; always inculcating purity and holiness, and manifesting a scrupulous disinterestedness; and throughout the whole of his career the special object of the favour of Christ and of God, shown by the revelations vouchsafed to him and the powers with which he was endowed. Neither of these pictures, however, would be complete; and though it is probable that the latter more nearly represents his real image, the vivid lights would need to be relieved by some dark shadows. We appear to see faith, hope, love, zeal, knowledge, ability—courage in confronting danger—persistence in the face of opposition—a resolute pursuit of truth without regard to consequences, and an assertion of the inalienable rights of the reason and the conscience in defiance of authority, which has been of inestimable value to the Church in many periods of its history. But these are accompanied by what in an un-inspired man would be called pride, jealousy, disdain, invective, sophistry, time-serving, and intolerance; by a systematic depre-

ciation of those who differ from him, and denunciations of their opinions and themselves, which have been too faithfully copied by succeeding theologians.

We must not forget that while the witness he bears to himself is to be received with much qualification, the spirit which he displays in controversy is obviously the natural outcome of his disposition. The loftiest tone of sentiment, and the utmost eloquence of style in writing and in speech, may consist with a low practical standard of feeling and conduct. Elevated conceptions of virtue, duty, and holiness, are perhaps, more often than we like to confess, associated with grievous lapses into error. And if in the case of Paul we find that his ideal of the essential characteristics of Christian love did not induce him to suffer long, or prevent him from vaunting himself, or from being easily provoked, or from thinking and speaking evil of whomsoever opposed him, so his inculcation of other virtues affords us proof that he exemplified them in his life. Nevertheless, it is difficult not to suppose that there was an earnest endeavour to raise himself to the level of his own teaching, and to exhibit in his intercourse with the world the virtues which he enforced upon the Church. We should, probably, judge him unfairly if we were to estimate his habitual temper and demeanour by the occasional outbursts of violence that have been preserved to us. He was a man of high qualities and eminent virtues. He set a great example, and he performed a great work. But neither his life nor his teaching was free from error, nor has their influence upon the history of the Church been wholly beneficial.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE CHURCH OF ROME.

Imprisonment of Paul did not check progress of the faith, nor his submission diminish freedom of Gentile converts—Names of preachers for the most part unknown—Probably Apostles, and those whom they commissioned—Language of Apocalypse and of Paul show a wider diffusion of Gospel than described in Acts—Tradition assigns a prominent part to Peter and John, the one at Corinth and Rome, the other at Ephesus—Objections to Peter's visit to Rome—Difficulty suggested by expression in first Epistle of Peter; this rather an argument against Epistle than against tradition—Contents of Epistle—No marks of genuineness—Neither appropriate to character of Peter nor original—Probably not the work of Peter—What was the relation between Peter and Paul—Silence of Paul suggests estrangement—Reference to Mark in Colossians—Natural that Paul and Mark should resume friendly relations—Not so with Peter—State of feeling towards Christians at Rome—Burning of palace and city—Suspicion directed to Christians—Grounds which rendered it plausible cannot be altogether rejected—Probably some judicial investigation—Cruelty of punishments—Atrocities not peculiar to Paganism—Imitated by Christians—Hatred with which Christians were regarded the result of their isolation, and of the contempt with which they regarded the national worship—Peter probably suffered in persecution, possibly Paul also—Existing legends untrustworthy—Subsequent condition of Church—Persecution would unite the two sections of Church, and lead to recognition of Paul as an Apostle—This, probably, first done at Rome, but subsequent to death of the two Apostles—First Epistle of Clement—Clementines—The authors of the latter in their present form probably ignorant that Paul was pointed at under the name of Simon—Do not, therefore, imply any hostility to Paul at the time.

FROM the time of Paul's arrival at Jerusalem, the task of preaching the Gospel in new fields, and of watching over the development of the churches he had founded, passed necessarily out of his hands. While he was a prisoner, it was, of course, impossible that he could exercise any personal superintendence, or preach to any others than such as sought him out for the purpose of hearing him. And the fact, which must have been



everywhere known, that he had submitted to James, and had recognized the binding claims of the Law upon himself, would give additional influence to those who professed to speak in the name of the Apostles. But his absence from the scene does not appear to have checked even for a moment the diffusion of the faith; nor his submission to the Law to have led to any diminution of the freedom conceded to Gentiles. The Gospel was still preached with ever-increasing success, and nothing was required from the converts but obedience to the decrees of the Council. Possibly, indeed, his imprisonment may have removed an obstacle to the growth of the Church. We have seen how ready he was to break out upon any new provocation. Had he been at large, his uncompromising temper might have involved him in fresh quarrels, and thus have absorbed energies that might be more usefully employed in sowing the seed of the word.

As we have said, however, the details of this preaching and the names of the preachers are almost entirely lost to us. And it may be suggested that it was later in time than we have supposed, and due to other agencies than those of the Apostles, and of the teachers whom they controlled. But at this time, excepting Paul, we have no reason to suppose that any one within the Church attempted to claim independence; and the result of his attempt was not such as to encourage others to imitate his example. All who preached the Gospel would, as a matter of course, defer to the authority of the men whom Jesus had appointed, and would be proud of their sanction. Only, indeed, as speaking in their name, and as teaching doctrines derived from them, could preachers expect to be heard.

With regard to the number of converts, and the extent of the field in which the Gospel had been preached, the language of the author of the Apocalypse<sup>1</sup> with regard to Gentile believers, making every allowance for exaggeration, implies a far wider sphere than that embraced in the Acts. And the inference we

<sup>1</sup> Rev. vii. 9 ff.

should draw from this language is confirmed by that of Paul himself,<sup>1</sup> when he speaks of the Gospel as having been preached to every creature under heaven. It is true that this phrase is not to be taken literally, even according to the narrow conception of the earth and heaven which Paul had formed. But, whatever deduction we may make, it must embrace the results of many labours beside his own. He could not dream of describing his individual preaching "from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum"<sup>2</sup> in such language; for the letter in which he uses this expression<sup>3</sup> recognizes Italy and Spain; and he certainly was not ignorant of Cyrene and North Africa, on the one hand, or of Egypt, Arabia, and Mesopotamia, on the other. We have, therefore, a right to conclude that, according to his information, the Gospel had been preached in all the countries accessible from Judæa.

And, independently of these inferences, there are strong reasons for assuming that such was the case. It is not merely that Barnabas and Silas would not cease their missionary activity just because they were separated from Paul, but that the success which had attended their experiment would encourage other churches to follow the example set by that of Antioch, and would render the leaders at Jerusalem ready to sanction and to further their efforts, as they had already done in the case of Barnabas and Paul. There is absolutely no ground whatever in the authorities we possess for the idea that the church of Jerusalem would view with jealousy the increasing number of Gentile converts, or seek to narrow the terms of entrance into the community, in order to exclude them. If, indeed, those converts were encouraged to continue practices which occasioned grave scandals, and even, it might be, afforded occasion for lapses into immorality,—

<sup>1</sup> Col. i. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Even this, probably, was somewhat of an exaggeration. The language of 2 Cor. x. 15, 16, appears to imply that he had not preached beyond Corinth, and that there were others who claimed to have preceded him.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. xv. 19.

and if, in order to justify these practices, they were encouraged to despise the Apostles, and to dispute their authority,—much indignation would be excited, and such converts would be repudiated. But if they were taught to live chastely, and to separate themselves in an emphatic manner from all suspicion of complicity with idol worship, and the licentious rites with which it was so often deformed, by refusing even to eat meats offered in sacrifice to idols, and to continue steadfast in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, then they would be welcomed. We may believe, therefore, that the Apostles would do all in their power to facilitate the spread of the society in Gentile lands and among Gentiles, and may accept the traditions of the Church that they were themselves personally the principal agents in the work.

Whatever doubts our absolute ignorance of the details of the history may allow to be raised, this at least is unquestionable, that when Christianity emerges into notice in Pagan and Christian literature, we find it widely diffused throughout the Roman Empire, and, apparently, beyond, not then as a sect newly introduced into any part, but long subsisting. And the earliest traditions connected this diffusion with the preaching of the Twelve.

In this work a conspicuous share is assigned to Peter and John. The former of these is described as having assisted in the foundation of the church at Corinth, and as having subsequently visited Rome, of which he was the first bishop, and where he ultimately suffered martyrdom; and the latter as having been the head of the churches in Asia, where he died in extreme old age. The visit of Peter to Rome has long been questioned; rather, perhaps, because of the inferences which Romish writers have drawn from it in support of the authority of the Pope, than because of the deficiency of testimony or the intrinsic improbability of the fact. And, recently, similar doubts have been expressed with regard to the residence of John in Asia. But though it may be admitted that in neither case is the evidence such as to free the alleged fact from doubt, or to elevate it above a probable inference, it does appear to raise a reasonable pre-

sumption in its favour, and thus to warrant us in accepting it provisionally; at least, in the absence of any countervailing circumstances. We shall have subsequently to discuss the question with regard to John, and therefore pass it over for the present. In the case of Peter, however, the reference to the church (or to the elect lady) in Babylon<sup>1</sup> in his first Epistle, indicating that the letter was written from that place, does, no doubt, raise a great difficulty. For on the assumption that Peter was residing at Rome, the letter must have been written from that city before the burning of the palace and the consequent persecution of the Christians, and there is nothing to suggest that at this time any Christian would use the word Babylon as a synonym for Rome. It is true that in the Apocalypse, a few years later, it is so used, and the example thus set might be followed by subsequent writers. This, however, is accounted for partly by the intense hatred with which Rome was regarded by the sect after the atrocious persecutions which they had endured, and partly because of the doom which had partially overtaken, and which still seemed to threaten, the city; reminding the writer of the woes which the prophets had predicted for Babylon. Not only the imperial palace, but many of the most venerated sites of Rome, had perished in the conflagration which the Christians were accused of having caused. And in the civil war which followed the death of Nero, the Capitol itself was almost destroyed. So that both in the wrongs it had inflicted upon the chosen people, and in the misfortunes with which the Divine vengeance had overwhelmed it, Rome might be deemed a fitting type of the old Babylon—alike in its crimes and in its fate. Before the burning of the palace, however, we have no ground for supposing any feeling of the Christians towards Rome that would lead to the use of such a name; nor the adoption of any measures for the suppression of the sect that might excite hostility to the Government. The state of the Church, as indicated by the letters of Paul, appears, on the con-

<sup>1</sup> ἡ ἐν βαβυλωνί συνεκλεκτή, 1 Pet. v. 13.

trary, to be peaceful. He is permitted to preach the word without hindrance, and the only opposition of which he complains is, that some of those who preach Christ make their preaching an occasion of strife. Certainly, nothing in those letters indicates any bitterness towards the rulers or the people, or suggests that any action had been taken against the Church, or that the Christian faith had been proscribed.

There might, indeed, be, and no doubt there was, an undercurrent of hostility excited by the success of the preaching of the Gospel, and by the numerous accessions that were made to the society. That their meetings were, for the most part, secret—closed against all but the initiated—held after sunset, and composed of persons of both sexes, would afford a plausible ground for accusations of profligacy, or worse. That they refused to pray to the gods of the city, or to join in any acts of public worship, would be held to be atheism. That they expected the immediate appearance of a King who was to put an end to the dominion of Rome, to whose representatives they were in the mean time to render obedience, would expose them to the suspicion of treason. And these circumstances would generate a smothered enmity which might at any moment be roused into action. But until some event occurred to make all men conscious of their common feelings, and to furnish a motive and a justification for their display, the sect would live at peace; daily adding fresh materials to the hatred with which they were regarded, but unconscious, or only dimly conscious, of its existence. So long as they lived in peace, protected by the law, and not suffering from the turbulence of the mob, they would not regard Rome with any special feelings of enmity.

This, however, is, perhaps, rather a ground for distrusting the authorship of the Epistle, than for denying Peter's presence at Rome. And it must be admitted that, independently of this argument, there are grave doubts attaching to its authenticity. Not that it is deficient in external attestation. Papias, we are



told by Eusebius, made use of testimonies from it;<sup>1</sup> and Irenæus and Origen speak of it as the undisputed work of the Apostle. But the two last only express the common opinion of the Church, which they adopt without inquiry or hesitation; and the first was very little likely to investigate the evidence in support of the genuineness of a writing appearing upon its face to be the production of an Apostle. There were in the time of Papias, as there had been, apparently, from the beginning,<sup>2</sup> many writings, professing to have been composed by Apostles and their companions, which the Church has since rejected, for the most part, with the unanimous approval of modern critics. These, however, at the time of their appearance and for long afterwards, were accepted by large numbers as genuine, and are often cited by the Fathers as such. Those which have been retained owe their reception into the canon, not to the evidence in their support, but to their doctrine; or, it may be, to the extent to which they had been recognized by various churches. And this Epistle was just one of those neutral, harmonizing works which served to bridge over the chasm that had originally separated different parties in the Church, and was therefore sure of acceptance. Neither, therefore, the use made of it by Papias, nor its subsequent admission into the canon, affords any evidence whatever of its genuineness. This must be decided by other considerations.

Looking, then, at the Epistle itself, we see that it bears no mark of the individuality of Peter, and has no relation to contemporary occurrences. There is no vindication of his character or conduct, no protest against the degrading imputations of which he had been the subject in a letter written to some of the very churches that he was now addressing, no reference to questions which, as we see from the letters of Paul to the Philippians and the Colossians, as well as by the Revelations, were still agitated

<sup>1</sup> H. E., B. iii. c. 29. As, however, Eusebius does not state what these testimonies were, we cannot tell whether his assertion had any sufficient basis.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 2 Thess. ii. 2, iii. 17.

in the Church, and which he, considering his position, was bound to notice—nothing appropriate to his own circumstances or to those of the churches. There is nothing, indeed, that might not have been written by any Christian of that or the succeeding generation who had before him the Epistles of Paul to the Romans and Ephesians, and the Epistle of James. It is not to be said that, in view of the great truths of the Gospel, which he was concerned to disseminate, Peter kept out of sight all disturbing elements; for the questions at issue were connected with these truths, and demanded a practical solution and practical guidance. As there can be no doubt that a party in the Church invoked his name in support of their teaching, and in justification of their opposition to Paul, it would have been imperative upon him, in writing a letter to be carried to districts in which that party was active—Galatia, for instance, and Asia—to have said something either in confirmation or disavowal of their pretensions. But there is nothing of the sort. The letter is a pale reflection of the doctrines of Paul, and chiefly founded upon his writings, having nothing but the name in which it is written to connect it with Peter. In addition to this, it is necessary to invent incidents for the purpose of making it intelligible. We must assume that proceedings similar to those adopted against the Christians by Pliny in the days of Trajan, some forty years later, in the very districts to which this letter is addressed, had been taken by the authorities in the time of Nero. Of this, however, there is no record. And the message of the Spirit to the churches in Asia (Rev. ii. and iii.) is an implicit contradiction of any such general persecution previously to the date of that work. Nor could the state of feeling towards the Christians in Rome prior to the persecution by Nero, even if we suppose it sometimes to have manifested itself in act, have led Peter to address such warnings and exhortations to his readers. To suppose this is to invert the point of view of the author. In this case, Peter, in the midst of persecutions to which he and his associates were exposed, would be writing to persons

who were at peace ; while the letter implies that the writer, himself secure, writes to persons who are persecuted on account of their faith. It does not appear to us, therefore, that the letter can be regarded as genuine ; so that no argument can be drawn from its contents against the tradition which represents Peter as having visited Rome and suffered martyrdom there.

Still, it must be admitted that this does not free the matter from doubt. There were many reasons which might predispose the Roman Christians of two generations later to assume that the chief of the Apostles had hallowed the city by his presence and death ; and legends to that effect might easily spring up in a congenial soil. On the whole, however, the persistency of the tradition, and the absence of any claim on the part of other churches that he died and was buried among them, incline us to believe it to be well founded. But, in that case, what was his relation to Paul ? Was it found that Paul even in prison was able to exercise an influence upon the brethren, and to draw aside many to his views, as Simon Magus is reported to have done ; and did Peter follow him for the purpose of counteracting in Rome, as he had done at Antioch and Corinth, the errors that he was disseminating ? Such would be the inference we should draw from the Apostolical Constitutions, though feeling how slight is its authority. And was Peter the person referred to in the letter to the Philippians as preaching Christ of envy and contention ? These are questions which, like so many others, we can state, but we cannot answer. We must be satisfied to reason tentatively to a conclusion which at the utmost can only be probable.

Certainly, it would appear that if Peter were at Rome during the period of Paul's imprisonment, the two did not meet as friends. If they had, it seems impossible that Paul should not have referred to his presence and support in some of his letters ; unless, indeed, we attribute to him a persistent pride which forbade him to retract a charge once made, or to acknowledge help from one whom he had held up to the contempt of his followers.

And if they were not friends and coadjutors, they must have been to a certain extent opponents or rivals ; for absolute neutrality would have been impossible under the circumstances. The probable inference, therefore, appears to be, that while Paul in his bondage preached to all with whom he was brought into contact, teaching his peculiar views of Christianity, and possibly forming a distinct church, Peter—assuming him to have visited Rome—was recognized as the head of the previously existing churches, which were closely allied with that of Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> If such were the case, there would be between the two sections, not hostility indeed, but coolness and some degree of estrangement. Each of the leaders would lament, and perhaps condemn, the spirit in which Christ was preached by his opponent ; but each would, nevertheless, rejoice that even thus he was preached, and men were won to his cause.

The reference to Mark in the letter to the Colossians, assuming, as we do, that it is genuine, may be thought to imply a more friendly relation between the two sections of the Church, and even between Paul and Peter, than we have thus supposed, since a very early, and probably reliable, tradition associates Mark with Peter. Or, on the other hand, as has been assumed by some critics, that reference may be thought to furnish an argument against the genuineness of the letter, it being supposed that the breach between Mark and Paul was never healed, and that the name of the former was inserted in the letter for the purpose of suggesting that there was no longer any hostility between the two parties in the Church. But this assumption ignores the influence of time and circumstance. Paul might have been dissatisfied with the conduct of Mark when he separated from their party at Perga, and Mark might have been wounded by Paul's assertion of superiority, and angered by his subsequent refusal to be associated with him. And yet, meeting at a distance from their native land—strangers in a strange city, and surrounded by

<sup>1</sup> He would not, however, have been the first bishop, for there must have been one from the formation of the church, and this preceded the dispute at Antioch.

an unfriendly population—they might be drawn together by a remembrance of their common race and faith, and of their former participation in the same labours, and might both be willing to forget the causes which had led to their separation. Mark, in view of Paul's actual position, a prisoner for the cause of Christ, might sink his personal grievances; and Paul would probably be rejoiced to meet with any exhibition of kindness and sympathy from a former colleague. After so many years, they would both be able to look calmly upon the circumstances out of which the dispute had arisen, and to make allowances for each other's conduct. Paul, too, might well be glad to have an opportunity of rendering a service to Mark, and thus of showing that neither former disputes, nor the differences that partially separated the brethren in Rome, had caused him to forget the obligations of nationality and brotherhood. And his submission to the church of Jerusalem, though it would not, without some personal apology to Peter, restore harmony between those two, might have removed all formal obstacles to a reconciliation with Mark.

In such a state of feeling towards the Christians as we have supposed to exist in Rome, the position of the church must have been in a high degree precarious, since at any moment circumstances might arise to call these feelings into activity. And these circumstances were furnished by the burning of the palace and the greater part of the city,—the greatest calamity that had befallen Rome since its capture by the Gauls. Such an occurrence would make men irritated and suspicious, and prompt to translate their suspicions into action. It would inevitably excite feelings of remorse, and devotion, and superstitious terror. So overwhelming an infliction could only be due to the anger of the gods; and what more likely to have caused that anger than the denial of their existence and the repudiation of their worship? Then, again, what could be more probable than that the men who mocked at religion, and severed themselves from all social ties, should have been themselves the authors of the destruction that



had overtaken the city. Nor can it be denied that there were aspects of the Christian doctrine which gave plausibility to these suspicions. If, on one side, it pointed to heaven, and called upon believers to qualify themselves for its enjoyments by the practice of virtue, manifesting repentance towards God and faith towards their Lord Jesus Christ; on the other, it pointed to earth, teaching the vanity of all earthly pursuits, and the nullity of all obligations, social or political, that might conflict with the claims of the faith. If Christ were King, then no allegiance could be due to Cæsar. If the gods in whom the Romans believed were devils, and the elaborate ritual which entered into every part of their daily life only a worship of devils, then the Christian should miss no opportunity of testifying his contempt and abhorrence of the system. If the fashion of the world was passing away, and the seemingly solid fabric of the Roman Empire might at any moment collapse and disappear, to be succeeded by a new state of things, in which Christ and his followers were to be supreme, then there was no motive to take an interest in any existing arrangements, or to strive to maintain them. And if, as seems probable, the Roman dominion was looked upon as that which hindered the coming of the Son of Man, it could scarcely be otherwise than a duty to strike some blow against its existence. We see, apparently, by the letter to the Romans,<sup>1</sup> that there were men who carried these feelings to the extent of denying or doubting the lawfulness of paying tribute, or even rendering obedience, to the Government. Such feelings would be likely to gather strength in proportion as the sect became more numerous and more completely organized, and as the vices of Nero became more notorious, and his rule more oppressive. And this side of the Christian belief could not fail to be known. Nor must we forget the possibility that many might join the society who were notoriously disaffected, because they thus found a justification for their hostility to the Government, and in the hope that they might derive assistance from the

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiii. 1—7.

brotherhood in the event of any revolt. Such accessions have been frequent in many subsequent periods, and it is probable that they might have occurred at this time.

It is quite possible, also, that we somewhat exaggerate the spiritual and moral elevation of the first believers. We not only judge of them exclusively from their own account of themselves, but we are accustomed to take only one part of this. We habitually estimate their conduct and feelings by the loftiest and most tranquil utterances of the New Testament—the Sermon on the Mount; the glowing eulogium on Christian love by Paul; the description of the coming resurrection; the exhortations to virtue and holiness, and to peace and submission. But we are apt to forget that even here also there is another side, and that those who anathematize, and to the extent of their ability coerce, all who differ from them, are not without scriptural warrant for their conduct. Apart from the books of the Old Testament, which were the only Scriptures known to the Church at this time, with their fierce denunciations of idolatry, and their injunctions for the merciless extirpation of idolaters, the Epistles afford a warrant for the utmost vehemence of language and feeling, if not of conduct; and the former would naturally tend to pass into the latter. If inspired men might curse their opponents—describe them as ungodly, brute beasts, dogs, hypocrites, ministers of Satan, raging waves of the sea, &c.,<sup>1</sup> though these were within the Church—might not their followers employ similar language to men without, who were the open foes of Christ and of his Church, denying the one and reviling the other? And there would always be a risk that the feelings which prompted this language might break out into act at any convenient opportunity, or upon some unusual provocation.

We should remember, too, that the greater number, perhaps nearly all, of the Christians at Rome, had endured wrongs of their own at her hands, which they would desire to avenge. They were almost exclusively slaves, whom the law left at the

<sup>1</sup> Jude, Galatians, 2 Cor., &c.

mercy of their masters, and made subject to torture and death, often for no fault of their own ; or Jews who resented the loss of national independence as a personal wrong, which it would be treason to Jehovah to condone, and who were occasionally goaded almost to madness by threatened interferences with their temple and their worship. And there were special circumstances at this time which might exasperate the feelings of both classes. It had been but a short while previously that all the slaves of a Roman senator, numbering several hundreds, of both sexes and of all ages, had been put to death, because one of them, in a fit of anger and despair at being refused the promised privilege of buying his freedom, had killed his master. This enforcement of a law which had almost become obsolete had excited a great amount of unavailing pity, and had raised numerous protests ; but these would only have the effect of making the slaves more fully aware of the injustice as well as of the cruelty of the law. The recent execution or murder of James, the head of the church at Jerusalem, and possibly of some of the leading brethren, even if it were not accompanied by repressive measures against the sect, would make his fellow-countrymen in Rome and elsewhere doubly anxious for the time when the Messiah should be revealed in flaming fire, and, possibly, doubly ready to do something to prepare the way for his advent. Among both there would be fiery and impatient spirits, eager, it may be, to anticipate the tardy vengeance of the great day of the Lord. It is easy to draw a touching picture of the peace, submission, patience, and hope of the first believers—their exalted faith in Christ—their tender love for each other—their prayers and good wishes for their Gentile neighbours—and their heroic endurance of the sufferings to which these virtues exposed them. But, perhaps, it is doubtful whether such a picture would be either accurate or complete. Our present experience of Christians who dwell in heathen lands gives little ground for assuming its trustworthiness. Their faith may be unimpeachable, but they are not always eminent for tolerance or charity ; nor, in spite of the glowing

descriptions with which missionary reports abound, are the converts they make especially distinguished by the homely virtues of honesty, veracity, and obedience to the law. Human nature was not so much more elevated in the days of Nero, among the servile and alien residents in Rome, as to entitle us to assume any exceptional effects from the preaching of the Gospel among them. That there may have been illustrious examples of Christian virtue is possible enough, and it is probable that there would be many who would confront death rather than renounce their faith. But to die bravely is often more easy than to live holily; and those who are most ready to win the crown of martyrdom are not invariably the men whose previous lives have most adorned their profession. From the first, Christianity set before men an ideal at which they should aim, and an example which they might follow, more elevated and better than had ever before been offered to the multitude. Nevertheless, the vast majority of Christians in every age and in every land, so far as we are able to trace their history, have been satisfied to live far below these. And we may fear that in this they are only following the example of the generation to which the word was first preached.

Although, then, there is no existing evidence to justify the accusation made against the Christians, of having originated or assisted to spread the conflagration, we are not, perhaps, entitled to regard it as altogether without foundation. If Irish Christians in London, living under the protection of English law, and having the full privileges of English citizenship, could attempt to blow down the walls of a prison, regardless of the destruction to life and property which their attempt might occasion, in order to liberate a member of their society, it is quite possible that christianized slaves or Jews in Rome might set fire to a prison or a palace in order to facilitate the escape of some valued brother. But here the odium attaching to Nero has diverted attention from the question of the guilt or innocence of the men who suffered for the crime which it suited historians to attribute

to him, but of which it is almost proved that he could not have been guilty. We have no desire to attempt to rehabilitate his character. Doubtless it was vile enough, even judged by the low standards of the time. Nevertheless, he had many admirers and some warm friends, who proved their sincerity by devotion to his memory. We may, therefore, reasonably doubt whether an impartial narrative would not efface some of the deepest of the shadows by which his life has been darkened. Did we know nothing, for instance, of the third Napoleon but from the writers of the Commune, we should form a very different opinion of his motives and conduct from that which an impartial estimate of the facts would warrant. And we do know nothing of Nero but from his detractors. But it is not necessary to enter upon this question, for in his treatment of the Christians he was supported by the feeling of the populace, who obviously thought the accusation credible, and who probably believed it to be true.

We have no information as to the circumstances which first directed suspicion to the Christians, nor whether there was any judicial inquiry prior to their condemnation. We may, however, probably assume that there was some investigation, as, according to the received view, Nero selected them as the victims, in order to divert suspicion from himself. It would be quite natural that there should be a judicial process, since, had they been condemned without evidence, this might have had the effect of deepening, instead of removing, the suspicion. If so, it would be possible, in the intense excitement of the moment, that mere proof of expressions of contempt for the gods and their worship, and of predictions of the sudden and speedy destruction of the city and the empire, such as many of the body must have uttered, would be sufficient to ensure their condemnation. Or there might be evidence of distinct threats and of rejoicings at their accomplishment, and, possibly, even of corresponding acts. And when, by these or other means, the crime was fixed upon the body, then proof or confession of being a member—or mere accusation, unless the individual accused would free himself



from the charge by offering sacrifice to the gods—would be sufficient to make all such liable to punishment.

The punishments to which the Christians were exposed were characteristic of the age and of the man, not invented specially for the occasion, though perhaps in some instances having a reference to the offence with which they were charged, but such as many probably had previously endured. They were as atrocious as those subsequently inflicted by the Inquisition, but less efficacious; and they afford an illustration of the refinements of cruelty to which wantonness or bigotry may lead men who are not under the control of an educated public opinion. The heathen populace of Rome gloated over the torments of the men and women who had denied the gods and insulted their temples, in the same manner that the Christian populace of Seville, or Paris, or Naples, gloated over the torments of those who had denied the Virgin and insulted the crucifix; but with more excuse, for they also believed that these victims had planned and partially caused the destruction of the city. In one respect this exhibition exceeded any single *auto-da-fé* in the number of its victims. But if they were numbered by hundreds on this occasion, it must be remembered that it was nearly a generation before there was any renewal of persecution; and the victims of the Inquisition in the Netherlands alone, within any single year of the administration of Alva, would amount to a far greater number. These considerations do not, indeed, diminish the atrocity of the persecution. They show, however, that it was not, as is almost always assumed, something peculiar to paganism in its conflict with Christianity, implying, thus, the debasing effects of the one, and the repulsion produced by the virtues of the other; but something which belonged to Christianity also in its later conflicts with heretics, Jews, and pagans; something, therefore, for which paganism as a creed is not answerable. And, certainly, the conduct of Nero is not the less deserving of execration because Christian rulers

and ecclesiastics have in some particulars imitated, and in some have even surpassed, his cruelties.

It is not pleasant to dwell upon the details of the scene as they are presented to us, and it is even repulsive to attempt to follow up vague hints into their possible meanings.<sup>1</sup> The Christians of Rome suffered the extremity of torment ; unjustly in the case of the majority, and possibly of all : even if there had been any valid ground for the accusation against individuals, the great body of believers would have been innocent of the offence charged. But they paid the penalty which an isolated sect, self-separated from the people among whom it lives, and contemning their worship, is always liable to incur in times of overwhelming national calamity : such a penalty as the Jews in Christian lands have often had to pay for their isolation. It was not the result of any opposition to their doctrines, for these were generally unknown, and at best very imperfectly understood, but of a repugnance to their practices. Men who as far as possible associated only with each other, who had secret meetings and secret rites, and who habitually manifested their contempt for the faith and ritual of the people amongst whom they dwelt, could not but provoke enmity. For however tolerant the instructed classes may be of novel opinions and practices which do not personally affect themselves, and however indifferent the masses might ordinarily appear to be to the national faith, the perpetual exhibition of an almost ostentatious severance from all that they were accustomed to regard with interest or reverence, could not but produce its effect. And Romans of

<sup>1</sup> The suggestion of M. Renan as to the meaning of the phrase in Clement's first Epistle, "The Discs and Danaids," is both ingenious and plausible. But the treatment of the daughter of Sejanus after his fall, equals in atrocity anything that he has suggested, and the trials of women for witchcraft often involved even greater outrages to modesty. Remember, too, the treatment of Huguenot ladies in the south of France by the "booted missionaries" of Louis XIV. M. Renan could draw a picture of their proceedings that might almost put Nero to shame. This is not said for the purpose of extenuating the horrors of the persecution, but only that it may be seen in its true relation.

all classes were too familiar with the various forms of torture and death, and too well accustomed to see them endured with courage, to be moved either to sympathy or admiration by witnessing the sufferings of the Christians, or the spirit in which they were borne.

If Peter were in Rome at this time, it is probable that he would have been one of the victims; though, if so, the various legends connected with his martyrdom have very little foundation, for he would have perished in the crowd. It is possible that he might have been put to death previously. If so, however, it must have been upon some charge affecting the majesty of the Emperor or the safety of the State; for we see by the case of Paul that the fact of being a Christian was not a legal offence at the time; and in that case his death would add another motive to some act of revenge on the part of his co-religionists. But it is obvious that the legends which we have are coloured by the ideas of a later age, when Christians were liable to death on account of their religion; and they are consequently entitled to no authority.<sup>1</sup> We can only say that from about this time he disappears from the legends, as he had previously disappeared from the history of the Church; all that is related of him being previous to the termination of the reign of Nero.

This sanguinary persecution and outburst of popular hatred did not arrest the progress of Christianity in Rome, though it must have greatly diminished the number of its professors, and have made those who escaped and remained constant to their profession, more secret and more cautious in their proceedings. There was no methodical and persistent attempt to exterminate the sect. The cruelty of Nero found a means of gratification in new victims, and the fury of the mob was appeased by the punishments inflicted upon the objects of their rage. And

<sup>1</sup> We might "rationalize" the "Domine quo vadis" legend by supposing that, having been enabled to escape from Rome or from prison during the confusion of the fire, Peter had returned, in order to cast in his lot with his fellow-Christians when he learned to what they were exposed; but such a suggestion would be quite arbitrary.

neither the ruler nor the people had any knowledge of the true character of the doctrines of the sect, or of its organization, nor deemed it necessary to do more than apparently stamp it out for the moment. Many suffered, and among them, probably, the most conspicuous members of the body; but it is possible that the larger number survived, safe in their obscurity, or having contrived to elude the search directed against them, or to escape beyond its range. And the public attention was in a short time attracted in new directions; first by the rebuilding of the city, and afterwards by the rising against Nero, his death, and the civil wars that followed. During these events, the spread of the faith would be unimpeded, and probably rapid. The universal anarchy and the dissolution that appeared to threaten the Roman Empire, would weaken the ties that bound men to the previous order of things, and thus facilitate the reception of doctrines that pointed to new hopes and to a new object of worship. And the earthquakes which desolated a large portion of the East, and the famines and subsequent pestilences which wasted Rome itself as well as some of the provinces, would lend strength to the belief that the end of the world was at hand, and would attract many to a society which promised safety and happiness to its members in the new era that was to succeed. Whilst the Christians would point to all these calamities as manifestations of the Divine vengeance for the persecution they had suffered, forgetting that they as well as their persecutors were involved in their consequences.

This diffusion of the society would, however, be at first unnoticed. The members having learnt the wisdom of concealment, would be afraid of provoking a renewal of persecution by calling attention to their proceedings; the meetings of the society being held in some secure retreat, and as secretly as possible; and, probably, the place of meeting being changed from time to time. At these meetings, one and another of the brethren might introduce a companion, to whom he had disclosed the existence and something of the tenets of the society,

and for whose fidelity he could vouch; and the candidate would be permitted to be present at the prayers and singing of the congregation, and to listen to the addresses of the elders; and after the due period of probation, and submission to the needful tests, would be admitted a member by baptism. There would, however, be no external mark by which he was distinguished, so that if he refrained from parading his opinions, he might live for many years without incurring suspicion. Only when some event occurred which made it the duty of every Christian to declare himself—such, for instance, as requiring sacrifice to the gods—would the members of the body be known, or even guessed at. We can understand, therefore, how it happened that, while an object of contempt and dislike to the people, and regarded as an execrable superstition by philosophers and politicians, Christianity might, nevertheless, silently spread and consolidate itself even in Rome. We know nothing of its progress or history in that city during the next quarter of a century, and then only what may be gathered from the first letter of Clement. We have, indeed, the names of two bishops, Linus and Aneucletus, and then of a third, Clement, the supposed author of the letter referred to, who is sometimes identified with the Clement mentioned in the Epistle to the Philippians; but none of them appear to have been martyrs. In the reign of Domitian, however, we read of a T. Flavius Clemens, who was put to death as an atheist, and who was probably a Christian, since scarcely any one else would expose himself to death for such a charge. If so, it is more probable that the name of the third bishop should be derived from him, than that an assistant of Paul, when he first preached in Philippi, should have been Bishop of Rome some thirty or forty years afterwards. And if the first letter of Clement to the Corinthians is genuine, as we may believe, it would furnish strong grounds for concluding that the writer had not been a companion of Paul, since otherwise, in writing of him as he does, he could scarcely have failed to refer to his own previous



intimacy with him, and even to have strengthened the arguments drawn from his letter by corresponding arguments drawn from his oral teaching.

These hints carry us but a short way. We can say little more than that the church of Rome survived the persecution of Nero, probably with diminished numbers, but, apparently, with undiminished faith and zeal. It is probable, indeed, that this persecution, while it winnowed from the society all who had not joined it from a sincere conviction of the truth of its religious dogmas, would render more intense the belief of those who were constant, and make them more eager to turn to account the few days that yet remained to them by gaining converts to the Gospel. It continued to grow in secret until the period had arrived when its numbers emboldened it to appear in public, and to obtain at least partial recognition from the State. The names of its founders are unknown; but it had at an early date obtained sufficient importance to induce Paul to send it a copy of his most elaborate Epistle, in order to prepare the brethren for his then intended visit. This intention was afterwards carried out, but under circumstances which prevented Paul from exercising any effectual authority over the Church, even had its members been disposed to recognize his claim, which, probably, was not the case. This, however, would not prevent Paul from preaching, and founding a church. We then suppose it to have been visited by Peter, who was at once acknowledged by the original church as entitled to exercise apostolical authority; and it is possible that his arrival might have coincided with that preaching of the Gospel "of envy and strife," to which Paul refers in his letter to the Philippians. It appears probable also that Peter suffered martyrdom in the persecution of Nero, in which both sections of the Church were equally involved, and in which it is even possible that Paul likewise might have perished. This persecution, with the death of Peter and the absence or death of Paul, would draw together the surviving members of the churches, and tend to efface whatever distinctions had previously existed among

them. The followers of Paul might only form part of a newer branch of the society, but they would almost necessarily be in a minority. They would, consequently, be unable to change, or even sensibly to affect, the prevailing opinions of the original Church, with which they were only permitted to unite on the terms of acquiescing in the system and doctrines already existing. And deprived of the presence and support of their leader, and thinned in numbers by the persecution, there remained no longer any adequate motive for attempting to preserve an independent organization. They would bring with them their reverence for the name of Paul, and their recognition of his apostolical authority, which the same circumstances might prevent the older section of the Church from disputing; for, after all, had he not been a prisoner, possibly even a martyr, for the cause of Christ? and had he not left writings in which the essential doctrines of Christianity were set forth with rare power, and in a form to suit them to Gentile converts? And in the agonizing crisis through which they had passed, individuals of both parties had been involved in a common doom, and had, doubtless, exhibited equal courage and constancy. This, then, was not a moment in which to dwell upon matters of difference, since these, though not without importance, were not of the essence of their common faith; especially as the persecution, allayed for the time, might at any moment break out afresh. What were needed, above all things, were union and concord. The hatred of the heathen populace could only be effectually met by cherishing a spirit of mutual love and confidence among themselves; each one remembering, first of all, that he was a Christian, and that every one who was baptized into the name of Christ was by that fact alone a friend and a brother. It is not improbable, therefore, that as the church of Rome was the first church in which Paul and Peter had both taught that was exposed to persecution, so it was also the first in which the two parties, ranged under their respective banners, were amalgamated into one, sinking their own differences in view

of the hostility to which both alike were exposed, and forgetting the rivalry of their leaders in the recollection of their common labours, and possibly common doom.

We see, at least, by the first Epistle of Clement, that the two Apostles occupied the same level in the traditions of the Church both in office and authority. There is nothing in that Epistle to suggest that there was ever any difference between them, or any divisions connected with their teaching, nor, indeed, any divisions at all in the church of Rome. This may no doubt be regarded as showing that there had not been any such differences as we have supposed, and it is of course capable of such a construction. But it appears to us impossible that Peter could have freely forgiven Paul for his injurious conduct and language, and have been his coadjutor in preaching the Gospel, thus lending the sanction of his name and authority to his pretensions and doctrines, without calling forth some word of acknowledgment, and some withdrawal of the imputations formerly made. We may even suspect that there was too much of human nature in Peter himself to have allowed him to fraternize with a man who had, as he would feel, deliberately held him up to the Church as a hypocrite and time-server, without an ample apology as public as the accusation. And this certainly was not made. We cannot, therefore, but conclude that there were permanent differences between the two, producing estrangement if not hostility, and that these were at first shared by their followers. We have attempted to point out the manner in which these differences would be adjusted; as it appears that they were.

It may be argued, however, that there was still a party in Rome opposed to Paul, denying his authority and repudiating his doctrines. The Clementine Homilies and Recognitions, which are supposed to be of Roman origin, and of the latter part of the second century, or even later, may be urged in support of that view. But, admitting the force of the arguments which have been employed to show the date and place of composition

of these works, it is obvious that they must have been based upon older documents. It is probable, then, that the writer who gave them their present form had no more idea of their reference to the Apostle Paul than had Rufinus, the translator of the *Recognitions*; or than had all the various readers down to the critics of the last century. We who are familiar with the New Testament, and especially with all that relates to Paul, can see readily enough that he is sometimes pointed to under the name of Simon. But, perhaps, this is only because these writings are not included in the canon; for we see by comments upon the book of *Revelations*, in passages of which Paul seems to be as clearly indicated as he is in any in the *Clementines*, that orthodox writers refuse to recognize the application. And no doubt those who read the *Clementines* in the belief that they were the productions of that Clement who was the third Bishop of Rome and an early companion of Paul, would also refuse to admit—or, rather, would never have the thought suggested to them—that Paul could be the person designated under the name of Simon. Few persons in those ages read, or cared to read, the letters of Paul, excepting for the purpose of controversy, and the Acts of the Apostles were almost unknown.<sup>1</sup> There would be nothing, consequently, to suggest the possibility of such an identification with the vast majority; while the few to whom it might be suggested would resort to any hypothesis, however extravagant, for the purpose of showing its falsehood.<sup>2</sup> The works, even if really emanating from Rome, and expressing the sentiments of that church, do not, therefore, imply any feeling against Paul, but merely a veneration for Peter, and a detestation of the doctrines and practices he is there made to condemn.

<sup>1</sup> Chrysostom complains that this was the case in his time.—Smith's *Dict. Bib.*, art. *New Testament*.

<sup>2</sup> As in "the attempts of Origen, Jerome, Chrysostom, and Theophylact, to show that the dispute between Peter and Paul was either a preconcerted controversy for the edification of believers, or that Cephas here mentioned (*Gal. ii. 11 ff.*) was some obscure disciple, and not the Apostle."—Jowett: *St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians, &c.*; *Notes to Galatians*.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE CHURCHES OF ASIA MINOR AND THE APOCALYPSE.

General tradition that Apostle John resided at Ephesus, and was author of Apocalypse—Objections to the latter by some critics who attributed to him the authorship of fourth Gospel—Recent objection to his residence at Ephesus—Eusebius citing Papias—It is argued that Papias does not bear any testimony to residence of Apostle at Ephesus—Probability that Papias in passage cited may refer to only one John—This, seemingly, view of antiquity prior to Eusebius, with exception of Dionysius of Alexandria—Possible reasons for their interpretation of passage—Irenæus and Polycrates support received view—General effect of testimony renders it probable that John did live at Ephesus—The position of Paul in Asia Minor different from what it had been in the other places in which he had preached—This the only place in which we hear of his followers as distinct from other Christians, and where there was a school that recognized his exclusive authority—John probably his opponent at Ephesus, and probably author of Apocalypse, but much doubt remains—Date of work—Its predictions were to receive a contemporary fulfilment—This proved to be fallacious—Effect of work in supporting Christians under persecution, but also in encouraging them to persecute—Difference between picture of Jesus there drawn and that given in Synoptics—Questions as to internal condition of churches addressed—Parties denounced appear to be Paul and his adherents—Timothy might have returned to Ephesus after death of Paul—Unpopularity of Christians in Asia Minor—Heightened by their sympathy with Jews in their revolt—This accounts for isolated acts of enmity indicated in Apocalypse—No general persecution—Re-establishment of Empire would put a stop to manifestations of this feeling.

THE only churches, beside that of Rome, of which we have any notice, however slight, in the New Testament, after Paul's removal to Cæsarea, are those addressed in the first chapters of the Apocalypse—the seven leading churches, we may suppose, of Asia; or, it may be suggested, the principal churches under the charge of the writer, selected to make up the mystical number, seven. The generally received opinion has been, that the author of that work was the Apostle John, and that he was



at the time of its composition, and had been previously, the head or bishop of the church in the district, an office which he continued to hold till his death. It is true that there has been for some time an influential minority, who have denied that the Apostle could have written the Apocalypse; but this has been mainly on the ground that the same person could not have been the author of that work and of the fourth Gospel, which latter has been attributed to him. But these reasoners have not questioned the belief that he was settled at Ephesus, which has generally been received as one of the best attested facts in early Christian history. Recently, however, objections have been taken to this view; among others, by Dr. Keim in his "Jesus of Nazara," and by Professor Scholten.<sup>1</sup> And it is argued that the whole story is legendary, having no basis of fact whatever, and founded upon a transfer to the Apostle of incidents which really belong to a Presbyter of the same name who was settled at Ephesus.

The belief in the residence of the Apostle at Ephesus was founded upon statements made by Eusebius in connection with a passage which he quotes from Papias,<sup>2</sup> and upon what was supposed to be the corroborating testimony of Irenæus, Polycarp, and Polycrates, confirmed by the uniform tradition of the Church. Papias, in the passage referred to, after describing his indifference to anything but the true tradition, goes on to say that whenever he met with any one who had been a follower of the Presbyters anywhere, he made it a point to inquire what had been their statements—what did Andrew or Peter say, or what Philip, or what Thomas, or John, or Matthew, or any other of the disciples of our Lord; or what things do Aristion and the Presbyter John, the disciples of the Lord, say.<sup>3</sup> Eusebius then points out that the

<sup>1</sup> I only know the work of Professor Scholten from the notice in the Appendix to Renan's *L'Antechrist*.

<sup>2</sup> Eusebius, *H. E.*, B. iii. c. 39.

<sup>3</sup> There appears at first some plausibility in the suggestion of M. Renan (*L'Antechrist*, Intro. xxiv.), that the passage in Papias referring to the two last should read,

name of John is twice mentioned; once among the Apostles, and once in a separate class, after Aristion, when it is distinguished by the title Presbyter. From this, he argues for the truth of the statement of those<sup>1</sup> who assert that there were two of the same name in Asia, and that there were two tombs in Ephesus, both of which were called John's to that day. It is then said that the passage cited from Papias does not really afford any ground whatever for supposing that the Apostle John was ever connected with Ephesus; but, on the contrary, the manner in which he is introduced, last but one in the list of the names of the Apostles who are mentioned, repels such a conclusion. And it is further argued that Papias is really an authority for the view that he never lived there, since he is quoted by a writer of the ninth century as asserting that John was killed by the Jews.<sup>2</sup> It is possible, however, that there is no more reliance to be placed upon this last quotation, than upon that which has also been found in a writer of the same century, in which Papias is represented as having described himself as writing the fourth Gospel from the dictation of John. The statement is implicitly contradicted by Eusebius, who had the writings of Papias before him, and who refers his readers to them for fuller information, as well as by Irenæus, who was obviously familiar with them; neither of whom could have been aware of its existence. And though both of these writers are uncritical, and both write in the interests of what they understand to be "the truth," it is difficult to believe that they could both have made the mistake of supposing that the Apostle John lived and died at Ephesus, if Papias, in the books which they used, had so plainly stated that he was martyred elsewhere.

If, indeed, we accept the reasoning of Eusebius, we must con-

"ὅτι τοῦ κυρίου (μαθητῶν) μαθηταί," thus making them disciples of the Apostles, and not of the Lord. But this seems inconsistent with the purport of the passage, for in that case they would have been those to whom Papias resorted for the purpose of inquiry.

<sup>1</sup> Apparently Dionysius of Alexandria, but perhaps others also.

<sup>2</sup> Scholten, cited by Renan in *L'Antechrist*, App.

clude that Irenæus, in the passage in which he refers to Papias, was mistaken in supposing him to have been a hearer of the Apostle, and it may therefore be argued that he carried the mistake throughout, and had applied to the Apostle language which Papias had employed with regard to the Presbyter. But that he could make such a mistake, assuming it to have been one, only lends strength to the inference that the writings of Papias contained nothing which would have rendered it so palpably inexcusable. For there were no dogmatic reasons which made it necessary to attribute this character to Papias. If there had really been a John residing at Ephesus, of whom Papias had been a hearer, and who, though not one of the Apostles, had been a disciple of Jesus, admitted to listen to his private communications as well as to his public discourses, his authority, recognized as it had been by Papias and Polycarp, would have sufficed for the purpose for which Irenæus was writing. It appears, therefore, that the alleged quotation from Papias, upon which Scholten relies, may be fairly left out of consideration.

And with regard to the argument from the order in which the names are mentioned, without denying that it suggests, it is obvious that it is of itself insufficient to establish, such a conclusion as Dr. Keim has drawn from it. For it is difficult to suppose that Andrew, in the traditions of the Church, or in the view of Papias, was the first of the Apostles, or John nearly the last, or that Peter was more nearly connected with the churches in Asia Minor than Philip. In the absence of other evidence, it would warrant the inference that the Apostle John had not any special importance in the circle whose traditions were collected by Papias; but it would not affect, or only in a very trifling degree, the weight of any positive testimony that he had.

The contribution of Eusebius to the decision of this question is partly in the extracts he has given from Papias, and partly in his own statement of the inference he draws from his writings, and from the traditions of the Church. With regard to the former, if they stood alone, it would be difficult to deny that there

were plausible grounds at least for arguing that Papias referred really to only one John, the Apostle; even though such arguments might not carry complete conviction. He speaks of his inquiries of those who had been companions of the "Presbyters" as to what they had said. What did Andrew, Peter, Philip, Thomas, John, or Matthew say?—these being the persons to whom he applies the term—and then goes on, "What do Aristion and the Presbyter John say?" Certainly, it does not follow that a man is wanting in a feeling for truth<sup>1</sup> because he assumes that Papias used the same word "Presbyter" in the same sense throughout the same sentence. The assumption may be erroneous, but it is not so palpably absurd as to convict the person who makes it of ill faith. For the question would be, whether it were more probable that Papias should refer to the same person twice in different connections, or that, after having designated Apostles by the specific word Presbyter, he should in the very same sentence have employed that word to designate a person who was not an Apostle. And, upon the whole, the former appears to us more probable. For the word Presbyter is not employed to designate old men, else would it be applied to Aristion, who as a personal disciple of Jesus must certainly have been such, but, apparently, as an official designation, and, in the first part of the sentence, as synonymous with Apostle: how then are we to account for its being given to one to whom it does not apply? If there had been two disciples of the Lord named John, one an Apostle and the other not, how does it happen that the very title which in the earlier part of the sentence is employed to indicate the Apostleship of the one, should in the latter part be employed to indicate the mere eldership of the other? And in this uncertainty, the suggestion which has been made is quite allowable, viz. that the double reference to the Apostle John might have arisen from his having

<sup>1</sup> Keim, *Jesus of Nazara*, English Edition, I. 215, n. Dr. Keim occasionally displays a little too much of the theological temper in referring to critics whose views differ from his own.

been alive when Papias began his inquiries, so that he is first named as one of a general class, and afterwards as a still remaining witness, whose testimony might be procured. And it must be remembered that, according to Eusebius, we are not dealing with the words of a clear, logical thinker and writer, but of a man very limited in his understanding, and apparently passing into old age, when repetitions of this kind might be expected. Nevertheless, we do not suggest this as anything but a probable inference, or deny that there are plausible grounds for the opposite conclusion.

Looking at the language of Eusebius, one would surmise that the view which he takes was a novel, or at any rate an unusual, interpretation of the language of Papias, opposed to that which had generally prevailed; one, therefore, which it is necessary to fortify by extrinsic reasons. This he attempts to do by a reference to the tradition which asserted that there had been two persons of the name of John in Asia, and that there were the tombs of two Johns in Ephesus. In this line of argument, he follows Dionysius of Alexandria, and the interpretation may be due with both entirely to dogmatic reasons. We can see, indeed, that they had a strong motive for suggesting that there was this Presbyter in addition to the Apostle; this desire to free the latter from the imputation of having written the Apocalypse; and (in the case of Eusebius) of having given a basis to the millenarian fancies of Papias, a sample of which is preserved by Irenæus in his description of the giant grapes and corn of Paradise. If Eusebius were really right in supposing that there were two Johns, both Presbyters, and both disciples of the Lord—the one an Apostle and the other not—and that both are referred to by Papias in the passage he has quoted, he may be also right in inferring that when Papias speaks of having heard various statements from the Presbyter John, he is speaking exclusively of the latter. But it is obvious that this inference rests upon the previous supposition; for if Papias referred to



only one person in the passage cited, then he would throughout his work have employed the same word *Presbyter* to designate the Apostle, as he was obviously understood to have done by Irenæus. It will be seen that the statement of Eusebius is not intended to throw any doubt upon the fact of the Apostle John having resided at Ephesus; nor even upon the fact that Papias bore testimony to such residence, though indirectly it has the latter effect. His object is simply to show grounds for assuming that there was this *Presbyter John* in addition to the Apostle, seemingly for the purpose of making him the author of the *Apocalypse*. It is purely arbitrary to accept the tradition which he cites as a proof with regard to the one, and to reject it with regard to the other. If there were two Johns living in Asia and buried at Ephesus, we have a right to assume that the Apostle was one. If, however, there was only one, upon what ground can we be asked to infer that it was the *Presbyter*, of whom, so far as appears, we know nothing, excepting in the works of Papias; where all writers but Dionysius and Eusebius had seen no one but the Apostle?

Not only is the opinion of Eusebius partially discredited by his obvious motive, but it is opposed to that of Irenæus, who was familiar with the writings of Papias, possibly in a more original form, and, apparently, also to that of Polycrates, the contemporary of Irenæus and Bishop of Ephesus. Irenæus was a native of Asia Minor, and he had been a hearer of Polycarp in his youth.<sup>1</sup> He was, therefore, familiar with the Christian traditions of the district, which we see from Papias had been carefully preserved. He certainly knew of only one John in Asia Minor as an authority for Christian doctrine, whom he describes as a disciple of the Lord, and who must, it would seem, have

<sup>1</sup> It has been suggested that the letter to Florinus, in which the reference to Polycarp is made, is not genuine; but the reasons urged appear to be insufficient, and it would be almost as allowable to suggest that Eusebius had manipulated the passage he cites in order to support his view. We must argue from the materials we possess, while, nevertheless, admitting the doubts which affect all of them.

been the Apostle. It has been suggested, indeed, that in the passages in which he refers to John as a contemporary of Polycarp,<sup>1</sup> or as having been known to Papias, he is speaking, not of the Apostle, but of the Presbyter, since he calls him only "the disciple of the Lord." But not to dwell upon the obvious improbability that he should have mentioned an otherwise unknown John by that designation, without something to identify him or to mark his position in the Church, he shows that by this phrase he means the Apostle, when he says, "John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon his breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia."<sup>2</sup> And to oppose to this the references to Paul in the Ignatian Epistles, for the purpose of proving that John was unknown in the district, as Dr. Keim does, considering the very strong ground for believing these Epistles in the version which he cites to be later forgeries, is almost to confess the weakness of the cause he sustains.

It appears, then, that Eusebius understood Papias to have testified to the residence of the Apostle John in Asia, and that he also refers to a confirmatory tradition, and to the existence of a tomb in Ephesus bearing his name; that Irenæus, a native of Asia Minor, gives the same testimony, in support of which he refers to Polycarp and to the old men who had heard John, as well as to the writings of Papias; and that this testimony is supported by Polycrates, his contemporary, and Bishop of Ephesus. Justin attributes the Apocalypse, the contents of which imply that the author was a person of authority in the churches of Asia Minor, including that of Ephesus, to the Apostle. And the uniform opinion of the Fathers has confirmed this view of the residence of John at Ephesus, with the single exception of the writer of the ninth century, a fragment of whose work is quoted by Scholten. This evidence may not suffice to free the question from doubt. We are, indeed, far from suggesting that it does; but at least it appears to entitle us to regard it as pro-

<sup>1</sup> Keim: *Jesus of Nazara*, I. 217.

<sup>2</sup> Iren., *Adv. Hær. B.* iii. c. 1.

bable.<sup>1</sup> Whether or not there was another John who succeeded the Apostle as Bishop of Ephesus,<sup>2</sup> and who long survived him, and whether the two may have been partially confounded in the traditions of the Church, are questions which we must be content to leave undecided.

We have seen that the position that Paul occupied in Ephesus during the whole period of his residence there differed from that which he had occupied in Corinth, and in the other places in which he had taught previously. He had ceased to be an agent of the church of Antioch; and by his quarrel with Peter and his refusal to comply with the directions of James, he had necessarily forfeited the sanction which they had previously given to his mission. The persons by whom he is surrounded appear to be of inferior position in the Church, and to be personally dependent upon himself. There is no one of the first rank among the brethren, such as Barnabas or Silas. His principal companions appear to be Timothy, a previously unknown disciple, whom he had introduced into the mission, having first circumcised him for the purpose, and Titus, who had been his personal companion on his visit to Jerusalem, and of whom we hear nothing but from Paul himself. Neither they nor Erastus, who is the only other person mentioned as connected with him during his stay at Ephesus, had, so far as we are informed, any relations with the church at Jerusalem. We should, consequently, expect that there would be a more marked distinction between the followers of Paul and the rest of the church in Ephesus and the surrounding district, than in any other place;

<sup>1</sup> It has been argued that the absurd interpretations which Irenæus gives of the number of the Beast, founded, probably, upon a report of the teaching of John, deprive his claim to have received a report of that teaching of all value. But if John had lived twenty or thirty years after writing the Apocalypse, he would have seen the Roman Empire established apparently upon a firmer basis than ever; and he might be led to seek or to invent some new meaning for the number; since its first meaning had been proved erroneous by the event. Or if he did not, his followers would do it for him.

<sup>2</sup> *Apost. Const.* vii. 45.

for there such churches as he or his deputies might found would be taught to look to him exclusively, and would be separate from the first. We find traces of such a distinction in these churches in the Revelations, and, so far as we are aware, nowhere else. This, indeed, may be because the churches addressed in that work are the only churches of which we have any contemporary information; but it is more probably due to the position of Paul at the time he preached in that country. And it is in the region of Asia Minor alone that we hear of the existence of a school that recognized the authority of Paul, to the exclusion of that of the Twelve. In Corinth, though the dissensions within the body of the church had been vehement and bitter, they did not, apparently, produce any permanent estrangement, or prevent the brethren from forming one united body. In the traditions of that church an equal share in founding it was attributed to Peter and to Paul;<sup>1</sup> and even in the churches of Macedonia, with which Paul is supposed to have maintained such friendly relations, and to two of which he addressed letters, there is no hint of any attempt to attribute peculiar authority to him. But all of these churches would have been taught, when the Gospel was first preached to them, to recognize the rightful pre-eminence of the Apostles. Their attachment to Paul does not seem to have led them to the length of subsequently questioning this pre-eminence.

In the churches of Asia Minor, the case, however, appears to have been very different; at least, if we can attach any weight to the language of the Apocalypse, there were, or shortly previous there had been, two parties in all of the churches named. The terms in which the parties denounced are described in the message of the Spirit, are applicable to Paul and his followers, as seen from the standpoint of their opponents; and, as far as we know, are not applicable to any other party in the Church at the time. We have already stated the reasons which to us appear

<sup>1</sup> Dion. of Cor., quoted by Eusebius, B. ii. c. 25. See also the references to the two in the first Epistle of Clement.

conclusively to establish this view, and need not now recapitulate them.<sup>1</sup> But it is obvious, that in the view of the writer, this party is everywhere in a minority. This shows that there must have been some active and powerful agency at work to counteract the teaching of Paul. We have before pointed out the probability that the Apostle John might have been the leader of the opposition, even from the beginning, since it was important that the man who was pitted against Paul should not only possess qualities which adapted him to the conflict, but should be able to contrast his own personal claims with those of his opponent. And this was the case with John. If Paul asserted that the mind of Christ had been revealed to him in visions and dreams, and that he had received his appointment as an Apostle by the same means, John might refer to his intimate connection with Jesus, during which he had been perpetually receiving instruction, and to his own public recognized appointment, when he was commissioned to perform the very work which Paul now, apparently claimed as his exclusive right. If Paul were prompt, fiery, and resolute, John, if we may believe the second and third Gospels, was at least equally so.

These considerations, though they furnish reasons for the selection of John to be the representative of the Apostles in Asia, have, however, no force in themselves to show that he was so selected. Undoubtedly there is no evidence of the fact ;

<sup>1</sup> Professor Lightfoot, in a recent number of the "Contemporary" (Dec. 1874), adduces the circumstance that Paul himself refers to the incident at Shittim as a proof that he could not be the person pointed at by the name of Balaam. It is difficult to understand this reasoning. What can there be in the fact that Paul, in a letter to the Christians at Corinth, referred to a particular episode in the history of the Jews for the purpose of enforcing a counsel he was then giving, to exclude the idea that, in a writing composed some ten years subsequently, he might be identified with the principal character in that episode? It must be remembered that to the last he appears to have taught the intrinsic lawfulness of eating meats sacrificed to idols ("There is nothing unclean in itself." "Let no man judge you in meats and drinks." "Why are you subject to decrees: touch not, taste not, handle not," &c.). The very fact, therefore, that he had made this reference, if the author of the Apocalypse were acquainted with the letter—which, however, very probably, he was not—might even have suggested the identification. Certainly, it could not render it inappropriate.



for we have no information whatever of the incidents of his life between the time of the return of the Church to Jerusalem after the first dispersion, and his exile to Patmos, a period of about thirty years, excepting the single brief notice by Paul in his letter to the Galatians. But we can have no ground for supposing that he was inactive during this long period. The position which he occupies in the Gospel narrative, and in the traditions of the Church, forbid such a supposition. At the time of the meeting of the Council, he was present in Jerusalem, taking a prominent part in the decisions of the Apostles; though this fact is overlooked or concealed by the writer of the Acts. And if, in conformity with the uniform testimony of early Christian writers, we regard him as the author of the Apocalypse, then the tone in which he writes to the churches implies a knowledge of their circumstances, and a confidence that they will recognize his right to speak, which could scarcely exist unless he had for some time resided among them. We do not know whether he was banished to Patmos, or whether he had sought shelter and concealment there; but, in either case, the selection of the spot suggests that he was previously living in its vicinity. There are, consequently, probable grounds for assuming that he was settled in Asia Minor within a very short time after the departure of Paul; in which case he could not but condemn the practices which Paul had sanctioned, and dispute the authority of the officers whom he had appointed. There are, at least, plausible grounds for supposing that he had been deputed to maintain the cause of the Apostles, and the unity and discipline of the Church in Ephesus, so soon as it was known that Paul was preaching there upon his own independent authority. And the absence of all information as to his actual movements at this time, if it prevents these conclusions from being ever proved, also leaves them free from any countervailing testimony.

But it must be admitted that the question as to the authorship of the Apocalypse is even then very far from being settled. The external testimony is weakened by the uncritical

character of the witnesses, and by the probability that a work put forth in the name of John, as this is, would be almost inevitably attributed to the Apostle. There is, no doubt, considerable weight in the suggestion of M. Renan, that no one would have been likely to assume his name in his life-time for the purpose of addressing churches in the midst of which, on this hypothesis, he was living at the time. This difficulty, however, is not necessarily insuperable; for if letters could be written in the name of Paul to a church which he had founded while he was in the active prosecution of his labours, it is equally possible that the seer to whom had been vouchsafed conceptions, foreshadowing, as he believed, the immediate future destiny of the world and of the Church, should have sought to clothe them with authority by writing in the name of the great leader of the Church in Asia. And the description of Jesus—his appearance in heaven in the form of a Lamb that had been slain—his receiving the worship of every being in the celestial hierarchy—his being called the Word of God—seems, at first, inconsistent with the personal knowledge that John must have had of his human weaknesses and needs. In answer to this it may be fairly urged that a constant contemplation of the ideal Jesus had effaced all the lowering associations formed by his actual knowledge of the real. Still it may be said that the picture drawn in the Apocalypse is more likely to be the work of an ardent imagination, unchecked by any previous experience. And it may be further urged that the writer appears in some respects to distinguish himself from the Apostles, describing himself as a servant<sup>1</sup> bearing record to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ; as the brother of those whom he addresses, and one of the company of the prophets;<sup>2</sup> while he speaks of the Apostles as though not himself one of the number.<sup>3</sup> But the first of the two passages last cited can scarcely be relied upon,

<sup>1</sup> Although Paul did not consider this title as inconsistent with that of Apostle. Rom. i. 1, and other places.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. i. 1, 2, xxii. 6, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. xviii. 20, xxi. 14.

since he there couples together Apostles and Prophets, among the latter of which he certainly included himself; and the second is not stronger than the corresponding passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians,<sup>1</sup> to which it might be suspected to have a tacit reference, admitting, indeed, that the Apostles were the foundation of the spiritual building, but confining that honour to the Twelve alone, and thus excluding Paul. So far, then, as the internal evidence is concerned, no positive inference can be drawn from it against the alleged authorship. But the evidence in its support is too weak to allow it to be used for ulterior purposes,—for instance, to discredit the claim of the fourth Gospel to have been written by John; nevertheless, it does appear to us to preponderate. The discussions which have taken place upon the subject show how deep is the obscurity that involves almost every point connected with the early history of the Church, and, therefore, how unsafe it is to draw any positive conclusions beyond a few isolated facts.

Whether the Apocalypse was or was not the work of the Apostle John, there can, it would seem, be no reasonable doubt that it was written after the death of Nero, and while the Empire was troubled by rumours of his escape, and of his being about to return to re-assume his dominion; and written by some one having or claiming a position of authority, and possessing an intimate knowledge of the internal affairs of the churches he addresses. So that it is equally valuable as material for history on either supposition, and we may accept it as evidence of the facts it asserts or implies. We see in it how far the conception of Jesus among these Gentile churches had outgrown the original conception formed of him during his life-time; or even that formed by the church of Jerusalem after they had learned to believe in his resurrection, as depicted in the Synoptical Gospels and in the Acts. We do not

<sup>1</sup> Eph. ii. 19: "And are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets," &c. This, whether written by Paul or not, shows that, in the opinion of the writer, it was not unbecoming in an Apostle to speak of himself as one of the foundations of the Church.

see "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God by miracles, and signs, and wonders that God did by him." We are introduced to a symbolical being, like to the Son of Man; manifesting in his appearance the transcendent dignity that belongs to him, and describing himself as the first and the last, as he that liveth, and was dead, and is alive for evermore, and as having the keys of Death and of Hades. This is the form in which he displays himself to the eyes of his servant on earth; but in heaven he appears as a Lamb that was slain, and in that form occupies a position of dignity next to God himself, receives the homage of those beings who had before been nearest to the great white throne, opens the awful drama of the coming wrath of God, and presides over its unfolding. The scenes of this drama had, no doubt, in the mind of the writer, a direct and immediate reference to contemporary events, and were to receive a speedy fulfilment. If there is one thing, indeed, clearly appearing upon the whole book, it is that the events it describes and predicts are to have their completion within a very brief period. The writer is to refer to things which are shortly to come to pass—Jesus is coming quickly—the time is at hand; these are only a sample of the expressions which show the feeling by which the work is pervaded. It was no seer sending his gaze down the vista of centuries or millenniums, and forecasting the fate of the Church in ages when Ephesus and the rest of the seven churches should be ruinous wastes, or inhabited by followers of the false prophet; and when, among the greater part of those who still called themselves by the name of Christ, Jesus would be supplanted by his Mother, and the worship of God practically superseded by that of Our Lady. The thoughts of the writer are occupied with contemporary history, the actual condition and the immediate future fate of the world and of the Church. He is possessed by a sense of the awful calamities by which the world was visited; horror-stricken and maddened by a recollection of the atrocities practised upon the Christians at Rome, and fearing the return of the tyrant who

had caused them ; anticipating with anxiety and dread the probable fate of Jerusalem, but unable to believe that God would wholly give it over to its Gentile assailants ; and, above all, inspired with a firm belief in the ultimate triumph of Christ and of his Church, and looking with an assured eye to the almost immediate inauguration of that era of peace and happiness that was to succeed the present period of suffering.

In this expectation he was deceived. But his book has not been the less valuable to the Church on that account. Whenever believers in the name of Christ have been persecuted, as they think, for his sake ; whenever wide-spread calamities appear to threaten the existence of nations or of churches ; whenever one man, whether Pope or Kaiser, menaces the rights of states or the freedom of the conscience—men instinctively turn to this book, and find comfort and support in its utterances. It is nothing that their mode of interpretation is fallacious ; obviously so to all disinterested onlookers, and proved to be so by the result. Not the less are they consoled by the prediction that those who suffer for the right shall be ultimately avenged, and that the oppressor shall be cut down. Not the less do they appropriate to themselves the words, unequalled for tenderness and beauty : “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more ; neither shall the sun light on them, or any heat : for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” How many a man, under the influence of these hopes, has been led to exclaim, “ Even so ; come, Lord Jesus ;” though he knew that the coming of the Lord was to be to him only in the shape of a fiery martyrdom ! And as long as oppressions endure, so long will the oppressed and down-trodden draw consolation and encouragement from its predictions.

Unhappily, however, the work has another aspect. If it consoles the Church in its moments of persecution by an assurance of ultimate safety and happiness, it not only encourages believers to look with hope and exultation to the destruction of their per-



secutors, but it makes them eager to share in the work of vengeance. And it breathes a spirit of uncompromising hostility to all who do not believe. The pictures of slaughter and devastation which it exhibits,—the woes inflicted upon the myriads whose only offence is that they believe amiss,—the unpitied destruction, to the last man, of those who are not on the side of the word of God,—furnish a precedent and a justification for the worst persecutions of the Church of Rome, and have too often encouraged other churches, in their small measure, to follow in her track. If the book has supported the persecuted, it has animated the persecutor, inspiring him with the belief that it is a primary duty to extirpate heresy and to exterminate heretics, and that in his extremest severities he is only fulfilling the will and doing the work of God. The picture it presents of Jesus, seated on the white horse, with eyes as a flame of fire, with bloody vesture, and with a sharp sword proceeding out of his mouth, ruling the nations with a rod of iron, and treading the winepress of the wrath of God, is not more different from that presented in the earlier Gospels of him who was meek and lowly in heart, and who went about healing diseases and doing good to all alike,<sup>1</sup> than is the spirit by which the work is animated from that of the precepts inculcating peace, meekness, humility, forgiveness of injuries, and love of enemies. And, as might have been feared, the former have found a readier response in the feelings and practice of the Church than the latter.

The principal questions affecting the internal condition of the churches addressed, appear to have related to the influence of Paul and his party, or at least of some person or persons who falsely claimed to be Apostles and Jews, and who taught to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication.<sup>2</sup> In some

<sup>1</sup> Comp. "For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them," Luke ix. 56.

<sup>2</sup> M. Renan appears to consider that this refers to the permission of marriages between Jews and Gentiles; but this explanation seems inadequate. The earnestness and frequency of Paul's warnings against unchastity forbid us to suppose that he had

of the churches there were individuals who still adhered to him, and we may suspect some leaven of his teaching in all; but the party is treated as disturbing the unity of the Church, and as generally a minority. It is noticeable that, of the two churches to which Paul had written—Colosse and Laodicea—the former is not named, and the latter is rebuked for lukewarmness. It is neither cold nor hot, not adhering frankly and unequivocally to either party. In Ephesus, where tradition places Timothy as having been appointed a bishop by Paul, it would seem that there had been some defection from right principles, as the writer understood them—some forsaking of their first love, which may possibly be connected with his arrival, or with his continued action while John was for a time removed from the place.<sup>1</sup> It is not improbable that, after Paul's death, Timothy might have returned to the place where they had taught together, and have settled there—invited, it may be, by those who had remained faithful to the memory of the teacher by whom they had been introduced into the Church. But as long as Paul lived, we should expect him to remain, as he had been from the beginning, his companion and messenger. Still, it may be that in this case there would have been some more specific reference, pointing him out individually.

We may gather also that the feelings which had provoked the outburst against the Christians in Rome had extended to Asia Minor, though they had not excited any systematic or universal hostility. In Smyrna and Pergamos—perhaps also in Ephesus though this is left uncertain—the churches appear to have

ever sanctioned immoral practices. Is it possible that the "knowledge" of those whom he had taught sometimes led them to the idea that bodily acts could not sully the soul?

<sup>1</sup> It has been suggested that Timothy was the Angel of the church of Ephesus addressed by the Spirit. But then who was the person who said he was an Apostle settled at Ephesus, whom Timothy had tried and found to be a liar? There is no hint of any person outside of the Twelve, with the single exception of Paul, who claimed to be an Apostle; and we know that he made that claim while teaching at Ephesus, that his right to it was disputed at the time, and that he was driven from the place.

suffered from persecution. But in the message to the four other churches there is no reference to any other troubles than such as have arisen from false brethren within the body. It would be natural, indeed, that the enemies of the new sect in any of the cities in which it was established should be encouraged by a report of the odium it had incurred at Rome, and of the measures there adopted for its punishment and suppression, and thus emboldened to attack it at home. They might not be able to bring any legal charge against the Christians, but they might have no difficulty in arousing popular fury; and the magistrates would look coldly upon any appeal for protection or redress. Added to which, the death of Nero and the universal confusion produced by the conflicting claims of the various competitors for the vacant throne, would relax the bonds of authority, and give impunity to outrages against a body which was both unpopular and defenceless. But these attacks would depend upon the personal character of the individuals composing the churches, and the degree in which they had provoked the antagonism of their heathen neighbours, and might, consequently, be averted by prudence and conciliation. They would, no doubt, be partial and intermittent; breaking out in one place, and then dying away, and not spreading to others. Certainly, there is nothing in the addresses of the Spirit to lead to the idea of any general persecution, and there is no tradition in the Church of any such general persecution until the time of Domitian. And the circumstance that the banishment of John, and, therefore, the composition of the Apocalypse, was subsequently referred to this last persecution, affords very strong grounds for assuming that there had been none such previously.

We can, however, understand that the situation of the churches would be fraught with anxiety and peril from the time of the persecution at Rome, until the re-establishment of the Empire in the person of Vespasian. At first they would be exposed to popular odium as Christians; men who were looking for the immediate appearance of the anointed King, who was to

put an end to the sovereignty of Rome. And after the outburst of the revolt in Judæa, they would be involved in the hostility which the excesses of the Jews had aroused; for they were regarded as a sect of the Jews, and were known to be connected by close ties with Jerusalem itself, the head quarters of the revolt. Not only would this connection be notorious, but their sympathy with their brethren and with the fate of the holy city, and their hatred of Rome and its rule, which are shown in almost every page of the Revelations, might be expected to lead to some unseasonable demonstrations. John, therefore, might have been exiled from Ephesus to Patmos, and Antipas might have been slain at Pergamos, and many of the brethren in Smyrna cast into prison; not as the result of any measures directed expressly against the Church, but because their conduct or their language was regarded as seditious, or had, it may be, afforded a pretext for gratifying the hatred which their tenets or their practices had excited. Although we may suspect Josephus of exaggeration, the description which he gives of the massacres perpetrated by the Jews wherever they were the stronger party, and the massacres perpetrated upon them when they were the weaker, in all the various districts adjacent to Judæa at the outbreak of the insurrection, has, we may believe, a substantial basis of truth. The effects of these atrocities must have been widely felt, affecting Jews and their sympathizers in every part of the Empire to which the report had penetrated. And in Asia Minor we should expect them to be especially unpopular at the time. Probably there was nothing that the inhabitants of the various trading cities in that district would more dread than the disruption of the Roman Empire; for that would expose them to the anarchy and insecurity from which its consolidation had freed them.

With the complete conquest of Judæa, however, and the re-establishment of peace and order throughout the Empire under the rule of Vespasian, the hopes of the immediate establishment of the kingdom of heaven would die out. Christians would learn

to submit to what they felt was inevitable, and would accommodate themselves to the continuance of the Roman dominion. And in proportion as they became reconciled to the existing order of things, the hostility which their antagonism had provoked would slumber; but ready to be again awakened by any new provocation.



## CHAPTER XV.

### CHURCH OF JERUSALEM, AND CAPTURE OF CITY.

Nothing known of condition of church of Jerusalem after meeting of Council, excepting in connection with visit of Paul—Probable that Apostles had left the city before that visit—Silence of Josephus—Might be due to secrecy of organization—Church not involved in proceedings against Paul—Seemingly popular—Execution of James by Ananus—Probably political—Ananus displaced in consequence—Not known who was elected as successor to James—Improbable that church should have remained without a head for nine or ten years—Till return of fugitives to Jerusalem after its capture—Probably successor perished in siege—Conduct of church—Some might have left Jerusalem before siege, but the majority would remain—First efforts of insurgents successful—Progress of Vespasian arrested by threatened disruption of Empire after death of Nero—This would give renewed hope to Jews—Nazarenes would share in devotion to Temple, and would join in its defence—Apocalypse shows their belief that it would not be destroyed—Would feel the hatred to Rome displayed in that work, and would resist Romans—Faith had not extinguished patriotism—Description of conduct of besieged Jews by Josephus probably partial and exaggerated—Supremacy of church destroyed by capture of city—Services it had rendered to Christianity.

THE history of the church of Jerusalem subsequently to the meeting of the Council that fixed the terms of admission of the Gentiles, is not less obscure than that of the churches of Rome and Asia Minor. The veil is partially lifted for a moment at the time of Paul's last visit, but only so far as the opinions and conduct of the members have a bearing upon his reception. Our own conception of its position has been already indicated. We regard it as the recognized head of the sect of the Nazarenes or Christians, into whatever regions it had penetrated—directing a wide agency for the propagation of the faith, partly by means of the Apostles who travelled for the purpose, and partly by the instrumentality of brethren, such as Barnabas, Silas, and Mark, who were set apart and consecrated to the work—and watching

over all the churches, in order not only to maintain integrity of doctrine, but also, and perhaps chiefly, to enforce needful discipline and purity of morals. This, at least, it was incumbent upon them to do. It would have led to strange aberrations of opinion and laxities of conduct, if, in towns like Ephesus and Corinth, for example, the word had been preached and churches founded, and then these churches had been left to develop themselves unchecked, under the superintendence of men who had, indeed, become converts, but who had grown up to manhood as heathens, and had only been instructed in the Christian faith during the few weeks, it might be, of the missionary's stay. If Paul, in his individual capacity, was in the habit of sending messengers to watch over the churches founded by himself and his followers, and of addressing counsel, warning, and exhortation to them, we might expect equal care and watchfulness on the part of the mother Church. We may be certain that periodical visits would be made, and that in many cases persons of authority in the Church, whether Apostles or not, would be established in central situations as presidents of the churches. And this we suppose to have been done under the general supervision of James, the Bishop of the church of Jerusalem.

If we could draw any inference from the silence of the Acts, we should suppose that in the interval between the first Council and the visit of Paul to Jerusalem, all of the Apostles, excepting James (if he were an Apostle), had left the city, since none of them are represented as being present at the meeting to which he was admitted. We feel, however, how uncertain such an inference would be, since the same reasoning might lead us to assume that John was not present at the Council, though we learn from Paul he was in Jerusalem at the time; and as one of the leaders of the Church he would, as a matter of course, have been there, sanctioning the decision, if he did not take part in the discussion. Nevertheless, the absence of all mention of the Apostles in the report of an interview which, we may suppose, was witnessed by the writer, and of which he could have no

motive to extenuate the importance, does suggest that they were not there. In that case, we may suppose that they were not resident in the city at the time, since, with the exception of Peter, who might reasonably refuse, there was no reason why they should not have taken part in the proceedings. It may, indeed, be suggested that they did not care to give such an appearance of importance to the reception of Paul as would result from their presence on the occasion; but it seems more natural to assume, in accordance with early Christian tradition, that they had been previously settled in other quarters, regulating the affairs of existing churches and helping to found new. And this would only be the case if the brethren in Jerusalem heartily approved of their proceedings.

This zeal for the diffusion of the word of the kingdom among Gentiles, upon the terms of the decree of the Council, did not, however, imply any indifference to the claims of the Law upon themselves as Jews. They, in common with all Jews, regarded the Law as a privilege, not as a yoke. It had been conferred upon themselves alone as a special mark of the favour of Jehovah. It was not a burthen which neither they nor their fathers were able to endure; it was the seal of the covenant which God made with Abraham, the sign and the pledge of their right to share in its blessings. It distinguished them from the Gentiles who knew not God, and from those also who, though admitted to know Him, could not resolve upon perfect obedience to His commands. We might expect, therefore, that they would be zealous for the Law; for the same devotion to the cause of Jehovah, and desire to prepare the way for the coming of His kingdom, which led them everywhere to seek to make disciples by baptizing them into the name of the Messiah, would give additional force to the claims of His Law. And this, we are told, was the case. Not only are the disciples described as being very numerous, but also as being zealots for the Law.

If, however, the numbers of the sect in Jerusalem were such as to justify or even to suggest the representation that there

were many thousands, it is difficult to explain the fact that they are not mentioned by Josephus. Perhaps the most probable explanation of this omission may be found in the secrecy of their organization. The existence of the sect would be known, as well as the names of its leaders, and its objects and tenets; but its numbers would be concealed from all but the members, possibly from all but the chiefs, and could only be vaguely guessed at by others. For there was nothing whatever in their religious observances to distinguish them from the rest of the people, excepting that after or at their meetings on the Sabbath there would be a breaking of bread, and perhaps a drinking of wine, in commemoration of the last meal which Jesus had shared with his disciples.<sup>1</sup> And this ceremony was so nearly identical with that which we learn prevailed among the Jews in general, that it would excite no special attention.<sup>2</sup> Their Messianic expectations even were substantially identical with those of the majority, though connected with a specific individual as the actual Messiah. Although, therefore, they might be known to the authorities as a dangerous sect, having secret ramifications and teaching revolutionary doctrines, and perhaps as successful in propagating these beyond the limits of Judæa, there would be nothing on the surface to compel their recognition by the historian.

The author of the Acts leaves it to be inferred that the general body of believers was not involved in the proceedings taken against Paul, which were strictly confined to himself. It is possible that, in his exclusive attention to the fortunes of his hero, he may have overlooked the manner in which others of the sect were implicated; but this is not probable. He would hardly have been guilty of the injustice of passing over their suffer-

<sup>1</sup> The "breaking of bread" at their ordinary meals, if it continued to this time, would of course attract no observation. Only members of the sect would be present.

<sup>2</sup> "It was a Jewish custom to end the Sabbath with a feast, in which they did honour to it as a departing king. The feast was held in the synagogue. A cup of wine on which a special blessing had been asked was handed round," &c.—Jost. *Geschichte Jud.* I. 180, cited in Smith's *Dict. Bib.*, art. *Synagogue*.

ings, while describing those to which Paul was exposed. There was nothing in the offence of which the latter was accused to implicate the disciples, who, unless they had greatly changed from what they were at first, would be the last persons to be suspected of any design of polluting the Temple. Tertullus, indeed, is made to charge Paul with being a leader of the sect of the Nazarenes; but this is introduced, not as the substantial charge, but merely for the purpose of creating a prejudice against him, and thus predisposing the Procurator to condemn him, or to disregard his claim to be exempt from the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrim: just in the same way that a prisoner now-a-days might be denounced as a member of the International, or a secretary of a Trades' Union, although this was no legal offence, in the hope that the feelings thus excited might give weight and point to the evidence on the real charge. The language put into the mouth of Paul shows conclusively that, in the opinion of the writer, his being a member of that sect, and preaching its doctrines, formed no part of his offence, since he is made to avow this in the most uncompromising manner, while defending himself against the real accusation.

The story in the Acts is so told as to produce the impression that the brethren were living peacefully at Jerusalem, and even that they were popular with the multitude. And this would be the natural result of their opinions. They were "zealots for the Law," and "waiting for the consolation of Israel." They denounced the rich,<sup>1</sup> among the chief of whom were the unpopular Sadducee rulers. Their belief in the Messiahship of Jesus, and in his speedy return to set up his throne in Jerusalem, was a pledge of their enmity to the Roman Government, and of their readiness to rise against it whenever the fitting moment should arrive. In all things, therefore, we may assume that they shared the popular feelings and impulses; which, so far as they pointed in the direction of national inde-

<sup>1</sup> James v. 1 ff.



pendence and sovereignty, probably took even an exaggerated form with them. But of their conduct at this time we have no information whatever. Josephus, as we have seen, does not notice them; and the Christian writers who have survived to us are equally silent on the subject, with the exception of the description of the martyrdom of James by Hegesippus, until the time of Eusebius. So that we may believe that the sect was not only popular, but numerous. The state of affairs in Judæa, tending, as it did, more and more towards a dissolution of the bonds of society, and only saved from anarchy by the vigorous measures of repression occasionally adopted by the Roman Governors, must have attracted many to a community which proclaimed the almost immediate termination of the existing disorder and subjection, and the restoration of the kingdom to Israel under the rule of the Son of Man. It is true that the traditions of the Church, as they have been preserved to us, represent Jesus as sanctioning obedience to the existing Roman authority. But he limited this obedience to the things that were Cæsar's; and it was for the Church to decide what were such, as well as what things were God's. In times of religious excitement, Christians, of whatever sect or church, are apt to confine the authority of the magistrate within very narrow bounds, or even to reject it altogether, as conflicting with the higher authority which belongs to God, and to themselves as His children and representatives on earth; who, by reason of that position, are entitled to define the boundaries of the two domains. There is nothing new, therefore, in the pretension.<sup>1</sup> It has always been implicitly involved in the claim to freedom of con-

<sup>1</sup> The pretensions of Rome are, indeed, exceptional, in so far as the Pope claims not only to define the limits of the authority of the magistrate, but to exercise absolute dominion over the reason and the conscience, as well as over conduct, within the whole sphere from which the civil ruler is excluded, and to include the whole human race in this dominion; the baptized explicitly, and implicitly all the rest, if only that he may save them from hell by compelling them to enter the Church. Of course magistrates are especially included, and bound to exercise their power as the Pope may dictate. And these pretensions are made upon the ground that the Pope is the visible representative of God on earth!

science ; and it has often been explicitly asserted in the statement of the obligation to obey God rather than men ; proving on all occasions a fruitful source of strife, and even of bloodshed. And if, in face of the present policy of Rome, no Government can hope to be peaceful that repudiates, certainly none can expect to be stable that allows, the claim.

It was not very long after the arrival of Paul at Rome that (according to Josephus) James, the brother of Jesus, was put to death. The Procuratorship of Porcius Festus had been but of very brief duration. He died suddenly at Cæsarea ; and some time elapsed before the arrival of his successor. During this interregnum, Ananus, who had very shortly before been appointed high-priest by Agrippa, is described as having seized James and some others, and as having brought them before the Sanhedrim whom he had convened for the purpose, and then, when they were found guilty and sentenced to death, as having delivered them over to be stoned. This statement conflicts with the account of the circumstances attending the death of James as given by Hegesippus. But the latter is obviously legendary, and unless we suppose, with some critics, that the words, "the brother of Jesus who was called Christ, whose name was James," are an interpolation in the work of Josephus, is entitled to no credit as compared with that which is there given. It represents an idea of the relation of the sect of the Nazarenes to the rest of the Jews before the first siege of Jerusalem, similar to that which existed just before the second, when the Christians—no longer Nazarenes—were liable to death for preaching Jesus as the Messiah, in opposition to the claims of Barcocheba. The whole account of the affair, as given by Josephus, shows that the proceedings were judicial ; since the accusation made against Ananus was, that he had brought before the Sanhedrim a case which they had no competence to decide, and had carried out an illegal sentence. And excepting upon this ground, there was no pretext for the removal of Ananus. That a man, on whatever account,

had been killed by a disorderly mob, would have been too common an occurrence to provoke any comment, and certainly would not have exposed him to censure.

The arrest and execution of James are represented by Josephus as a wanton and purposeless exercise of illegal power ; or, at the best, the gratification of some personal or party hostility. But it is difficult for us to accept this conclusion. The subsequent conduct of Ananus is almost of itself an implicit refutation of such a charge, and compels us to suppose that, whether justified or not, by the real facts of the case, he did believe that the measure was required by the public security. And we can see that there were many circumstances that might lead to such a belief. At this time, the tranquillity of Judæa was threatened from almost every quarter. Robbers infested the country, and often penetrated into the streets of Jerusalem, adding murder to their other offences, and occasionally seizing hostages, who might be redeemed by a promise of immunity or by a costly ransom. False prophets collected multitudes in the hope of some miraculous interposition, and raised them against the Roman authority ;<sup>1</sup> and the whole tenor of the history implies a condition of insecurity and turbulence, and especially a growing disposition to defy Rome. It is quite possible that the Nazarenes, who were the "Fifth-monarchy-men" of the day, were not the least demonstrative of the many sects in Jerusalem, and, therefore, that the action of Ananus was prompted exclusively by State considerations. His conduct may have been subsequently regarded as a needless display of severity, and punished, as involving the assumption of an authority beyond his jurisdiction ; for the promptitude and decision he evinced, by preventing any rising, might well lead to the idea that there had been no real danger. And, doubtless, there were numbers in Jerusalem at this time, as there were in India prior to the Sepoy mutiny, to insist that

<sup>1</sup> Josephus, Ant. B. xx. c. 8, sect. 9 ; c. 9, sect. 3, &c. That they expected miraculous aid is shown by their leading their followers into the desert.

there was no danger of any organized rising, and to condemn the conduct of those whose fears or whose foresight led them to adopt energetic measures of repression.

The account given by Josephus is of very doubtful authority ; for he always may be suspected of colouring his narrative for the purpose of vindicating his own character and justifying the part he took in the subsequent revolt, and of raising the party to which he belonged by depreciating that of the Sadducees. We may, indeed, believe that James, the recognized head of the sect of the Nazarenes, and, probably, a man of mark and influence among the people, was brought to trial and executed by Ananus in the interval between the death of one Procurator and the arrival of his successor. And it is even possible that the promptitude with which the sentence was carried out was in part due to a remembrance of the recent interposition of the Romans to rescue a prisoner from the jurisdiction of the same tribunal. We may believe also that the illegal character of the procedure, from the Roman point of view, might occasion his subsequent removal from the office of high-priest. But it is quite possible that the same absence of a Roman governor, which enabled Ananus to assume the power of life and death, might have emboldened the disaffected in Jerusalem to take some steps for the assertion of their independence ; steps which, in his view, called for prompt and decisive action. It is true that afterwards, when the whole nation had risen against the Romans, and every Jew was compelled to take a side, he threw in his lot with his countrymen, and took a leading share in the defence of the city ; in the same manner that many citizens of the Southern States of the Union, during the late attempted secession, though deprecating the movement, felt themselves compelled to join it. Even then, however, his efforts were directed to bring about some peaceful solution of the conflict ; and he perished by the hands of the extreme party, whose excesses he had endeavoured, with some degree of success, to restrain, and whose animosity might be sharpened by a remembrance of his action on this occasion. We

may be sure that as long as reconciliation was possible he would have done everything in his power to prevent any general rising; since a man of his sagacity and experience could not but know that, whatever might be its temporary success, its ultimate failure was inevitable; while it must cause misery and ruin to the people in proportion to the numbers that were engaged. And so far as we can see, there was nothing in the religious tenets of James, or of the sect of which he was the head, to excite the special hostility of Ananus, to induce him to incur the risk which he must have known would attend any illegal stretch of his authority for its gratification. They were zealots for the Law, and punctilious in the discharge of all legal obligations. It is true, they taught the resurrection of Jesus; but this of itself would only lead to their being considered as mistaken enthusiasts. When, however, they preached, not only that Jesus had been raised from the dead and had been taken up into heaven, but also that he was shortly to return to earth with power, in order to restore the kingdom to Israel under his sceptre, it was obvious that such a doctrine might easily be made the basis of an organized resistance to the Government, and that any one in authority in the society, by announcing that the time of his appearance was immediately at hand, might raise the whole body of members. While, therefore, we cannot say what was the real motive for the condemnation of James, we can see that there might be strong political motives, and that there were apparently no adequate religious motives, for the act.

Of the subsequent conduct of the body we know nothing with certainty. We do not even know, for instance, whether any immediate attempt was made to supply the place left vacant by the execution of James, by electing a successor. From the account given by Eusebius,<sup>1</sup> we should infer that the election of Simeon as the second Bishop of Jerusalem did not take place till after the return of the fugitives to Jerusalem, subsequently to the destruction of the city. But it is improbable that the sect

<sup>1</sup> H. E., B. iii. c. 11.



should have remained for so long a time without any recognized head. The need of authority and guidance would be especially felt in the troublous times upon which they were entering, and there would be no lack of courageous and energetic men willing to fill the office, in spite of the dangers it might provoke. Neither history nor tradition, however, supply any information as to what took place between the death of James and the alleged flight to Pella, and we must be content to be ignorant. We can only here, as in so many other cases, attempt a conjectural restoration.

The trial of James took place, apparently, in the year A.D. 62, about eight years before the capture of the city by Titus, and five years before the beginning of the campaign of Vespasian. At this time the condition of the country was scarcely different from what it had been when Paul was received by the Church. And as Ananus was punished for his conduct in putting James to death, we may assume that whatever measures against the society may have accompanied that act, they were stopped; so that the members would continue to remain at peace. They would, therefore, still make Jerusalem their head-quarters; and share in the prevailing excitement. They might not, however, be affected more than others by the general state of insecurity and turbulence; and they would have no reason to quit the city. Whatever might be the "abomination of desolation," which, in the sayings now attributed to Jesus, was to be the signal of the flight of those in Judæa, it certainly had not been manifested at this time. Even on the assumption, therefore, that this command had been really uttered by Jesus, or had been previously current in the society, there was nothing to induce them to suppose that the time for their flight had arrived. But then, if they continued to reside in Jerusalem, one of the most necessary acts would be to fill the place which James had occupied; for his death would neither diminish the zeal and faith of the brethren, nor lessen the importance of the work which they had to perform, as the centre of the agencies for diffusing

the faith, and the head of the various churches. For it is impossible to suppose that this act, which was essential to complete the organization of the society, should have been postponed for the nine or ten years that must have elapsed before the re-assembling of the church in Jerusalem after the siege. The society could not have remained so long without a head. The election, therefore, must have taken place at once. We may, perhaps, accept the tradition of the Church, that Simeon, the son of Cleophas, was appointed when the Church returned to the city after its destruction; though the reported manner of the appointment—the assembling of such of the Apostles and disciples of the Lord as still survived, together with his kindred, for the purpose—somewhat savours of legend. But if so, he could not have been a successor to James, but to some unnamed brother who had filled the office in the interval, and who, probably, had perished in the siege.<sup>1</sup>

It is possible, indeed, that there might have been a division in the society. The successes of Vespasian, when the Jews were everywhere defeated in the field, and their strongholds were taken one after another, and when it appeared certain that Jerusalem itself would be invested, and left to struggle unaided against the whole power of the Empire, might have disheartened some, and have induced them to leave the city to escape its threatened doom. Or they might have been unwilling to witness the ceaseless conflict and bloodshed within its walls. But, even then, there would be others, doubtless the majority, who believed that all these miseries were only the signs that preceded the coming of the Son of Man, and who determined to remain at all hazards, prepared to meet him, taking part meanwhile in the

<sup>1</sup> Was his real successor Simon the Zealot, or the Canaanite? (Luke vi. 15; Acts i. 13; Matt. x. 4; Mark iii. 18). Our knowledge of the men who bore that appellation during the last years before the fall of Jerusalem is only derived from Josephus; and they might have been very different from what he describes, or have appeared in a very different light to their partizans. The leaders of the Mountain and Commune were heroes and martyrs to their followers; and so, we may be sure, were those of the Zealots whom Josephus describes.

defence of the city. We must remember that the first operations of the insurgents were eminently successful. The legionaries suffered more than one complete defeat, and Judæa was for the moment entirely freed from their presence, and in the power of the insurgent leaders, who occupied all the fortresses and administered the government of the country. We may be sure that during this period nearly the whole people would be animated by the conviction that they were about to regain their independence, and that those who were waiting for the appearance of the Messiah would have their hopes animated to the highest pitch. And this certainly would not be a time when they would dream of deserting their country or its cause.

The progress of Vespasian must have indeed gone far to extinguish these sanguine hopes, and to make all feel that, without some special Divine interposition, their cause was desperate. But they would never abandon the hope of such an interposition. And they would recognize it in the circumstance that Vespasian was compelled to pause in his career of conquest; not, it is true, because of the resistance of the Jews, but—what was of more significance—because, as it appeared, of the impending dissolution of the Empire. The excesses of Nero had at last exhausted the patience of his subjects. His cruelties might have been borne had they been accompanied by any displays of capacity or vigour, or even by a bearing befitting the Imperial dignity. But to suffer or to dread the extreme of misery from a man whose highest ambition was to excel in acts which were then abandoned almost exclusively to slaves—who neglected the cares of the Empire in order to win the applause of the lowest classes of the people—and who habitually exhibited himself in characters which were both ludicrous and contemptible, was felt to be intolerable. The province of Gaul rose first, and the example spread to Spain and Italy. The effect of this was to show to Nero his own isolated position, and to his subjects his utter incapacity and weakness, and thus to embolden his enemies and to paralyze the efforts of his few friends. Despairing of escape, and fearing to

fall into the hands of the insurgents, he sought refuge in a voluntary death ; and this was followed by a period of anarchy and bloodshed that recalled the memory of the last days of the Republic ; and that to the enemies of Rome must have appeared to be the prelude to its utter downfall. During the greater part of this period, Vespasian remained inactive ; and then, in view of his own possible elevation to the throne, left for Alexandria. It was not until after he had been proclaimed Emperor that Titus resumed operations in Judæa. The Jews would look upon this respite as a manifest proof of Divine favour. And the Nazarenes must surely have shared this opinion. They could not witness this arrest of the progress of the enemies whom they had themselves been impotent to resist, without attributing it to the direct intervention of Jehovah ; now, as ever, the Friend and Guardian of His chosen people. So long as this belief was entertained, some, probably the great majority, would refuse to leave the Holy City.

The express command attributed to Jesus for those in Judæa to flee to the mountains,<sup>1</sup> implies, however, that some of the brethren did take that course under circumstances of urgent peril ; but it is, perhaps, worthy of note that the language is rather applicable to the dwellers in the country who fled before the advance of the Roman army, than to those in Jerusalem itself. The Romans wasted the whole land with fire and sword as they proceeded, and the news of their approach would be a signal for immediate flight ; while the account of the siege of the city seems to show that, until it was completely invested, there were abundant opportunities of escape. Still it might happen that those who attempted to escape from Jerusalem would be exposed to imminent perils, and have to endure great hardships ; and though the words of Jesus, "those that be in Judæa," &c.,<sup>2</sup> supposed to be spoken in Jerusalem to persons residing there, rather appear to draw a distinction between the country and the city, we must not press this inference. It is, indeed, highly

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxiv. 15 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Notice also, "he that is in the field," &c.

probable that some of the Church—possibly the aged and the timid, with many of the women and children—did leave the city; but it appears impossible to think that this could have been the case with the majority.

The book of Revelations, which we may believe to have been written between the campaign of Vespasian and the capture of Jerusalem by Titus, shows that the writer considered that the city itself would not wholly fall into the hands of the Romans, and that the Temple at least would remain, preserved intact from the pollutions of the heathen.<sup>1</sup> But such a belief would have been impossible had the express prediction attributed to Jesus, that not one stone of the building should remain upon another, been a part of his accepted utterances. And there can be no doubt that the belief thus expressed by the author of Revelations must have been largely felt. No Jew, before the event, would suppose that the Temple, the house of Jehovah, where alone upon the whole earth He could be fitly worshipped, would be allowed to be destroyed. Whatever might be the punishment their own sins had provoked, whatever the calamities they were called upon to endure, Jehovah would vindicate the sanctity of His house, and preserve it from the unhallowed intrusion of idolaters. The members of the sect of the Nazarenes must surely have shared the sentiment that prompted this belief. They could not have so far forgotten the feelings with which they originally regarded the building, when, “continuing daily in the Temple, they did eat their bread with joy and gladness,” as to leave the city when it was menaced with destruction, not even raising a hand in its defence. If, according to the view of the writer of the Revelations, the city was to be trodden under foot, this did not imply that its defenders were to abandon their post, tamely yielding to the masters whose yoke they had for the time thrown off; but rather a triumph won in spite of their stubborn resistance. For the power arrayed against them was that of the Beast—the enemy of God and of His Church. It

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xi. 1, 2.



would, therefore, have been treason to their faith to have shrunk from the encounter, whatever might be its issue. That their efforts might be, or even must be, in vain, was a small matter. Their plain and immediate duty was to oppose their breasts as a rampart against the foe, and to leave him no other path into the Holy City but over their dead bodies. There was nothing in the belief that Jesus was to return and set up his throne in Jerusalem, and that the desolation of the country and the investment and partial destruction of the city were to be the precursors of his coming, to detract from this duty, or to render his followers less resolute in its discharge. On the contrary, this expectation would furnish an additional motive for resistance; while every account that reached them of the successes of the Romans, and of the atrocities that marked their progress, would deepen the resolve to resist to the uttermost, and make them spurn all offers of compromise.

This view is opposed to current opinions, but it seems difficult to question its substantial accuracy. We are too apt to look at the sect of the Nazarenes in the light presented by some of their hopes and beliefs, and to exclude the others. No doubt, these beliefs had a religious and spiritual aspect; but they had a patriotic and political side as well. The disciples were to forgive injuries and to love their enemies; but they were not to abandon their fellow-countrymen in their extremity, or see the Temple invaded by the foes of God. Granted that they looked upon Jesus as the manifestation of Jehovah, and that they hoped for the forgiveness of their sins and admission into the kingdom he was to found by virtue of their faith in him; still they looked for his return to earth; and the kingdom he was to found was to be a restoration of the kingdom to Israel; he was then to be in fact, what while on earth he had claimed to be of right, the King of the Jews. They venerated the Temple and were zealots for the Law; and whatever they might dread of the temporary success of the Romans, they believed that the Temple at least was to escape their grasp, and that their brief successes would

be followed by a retribution terrible in proportion to its delay. This, at least, it would appear, can scarcely be disputed by any candid reasoner; for this is plain upon the face of the books of the New Testament.

If it should be said that there are other representations in these books which conflict with those we have adduced, and to which we are bound to give effect, it must be remembered that the mind habitually takes a colour from surrounding circumstances, and is always prone to seize upon that aspect of doctrine which harmonizes with its prevailing feelings. If we wish to know what were the feelings of the brethren at this time, we must look, not at the Sermon on the Mount, which was delivered during a period of tranquillity and hope, and bears the impress of these feelings, but to the book of Revelations, which was contemporary with the siege. The events that fired the imagination of the seer of Patmos, and inspired him with the intense hatred to Rome he everywhere displays, were equally known to the brethren in Jerusalem, and might be expected to produce the same effect upon their minds. They, as well as he, knew the fate of the believers whose butchery by Nero had made a spectacle for the Roman populace; and they probably knew even better than he the desolation that had marked the track of Vespasian in Galilee and Judæa. If he had no thought but of vengeance and retribution, so neither would they. And they, as well as he, would be animated by a fervent faith that Jehovah would protect or would avenge those who took up arms in His behalf.

To suggest, then, that men possessed by these feelings and inspired by this belief should have stood idly by while their fellow-countrymen were risking life and freedom in the defence of the Temple and the city—should have witnessed unmoved the sufferings of their kindred, caring for nothing but how, by a timely flight, they might secure safety for themselves—is to impute to them a lack of manliness and patriotism which later developments of Christianity would, no doubt, sanction, but

which we have no right to impute to its first professors. They could not draw a distinction between the claims of their country and those of their God; for both, in their view, were identical. Nor would they dream of purchasing the favour of the King of the Jews, or admission into his kingdom, by a cowardly abandonment of their kinsmen in the struggle in which they were engaged, and a desertion of the city in which he was to set up his throne. They were not "Jews if you please, but Christians before everything;" who could witness with complacency the destruction or degradation of their country, if thereby some advantage might accrue to their Church. They were Jews who believed that Jesus was the Messiah whom their prophets had predicted; proved to be so, emphatically, by his having been raised from the dead, and that he was to restore the throne of David; and, strong in this belief, they would fight to the death in defence of the city of David. Not in vain would the words of the old lament which their fathers had sung by the waters of Babylon, appeal to them. They would take up the strain, to which the threatened fate of the city had given an especial emphasis, "If I forget thee, oh Jerusalem! may my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth." Nor would their conduct belie their language.

We may believe, as we have already surmised, that those of the body who lived outside of Jerusalem would often have no alternative but flight. And it is possible that such as were unable to bear arms would seek some secure asylum, in which they might await in safety the coming of their Lord; for they would not be bound to expose themselves to the sufferings of a well-nigh hopeless defence. But this very hopelessness only made it more imperative that whoever could strike a blow on the side of Jehovah should devote himself to the work. To save life by a cowardly flight would indeed be to lose it; and this was the last thing they would contemplate. The Romans were the foes of God and of Christ; so long as their rule endured, the

establishment of the kingdom of heaven was impossible. Every one, therefore, who should lose his life in the attempt to overthrow their dominion, would assuredly find it. Such, it seems, must have been, and such, we have no doubt, actually were the feelings and conduct of the disciples in Jerusalem during the whole course of the war, and up to the very moment of the capture of the city. The heavenly vision and the flight of the whole Church to Pella, described by Eusebius and Epiphanius,<sup>1</sup> expresses the feelings of a later age, when all perception of the true relation of the brethren at Jerusalem to the Law and to their fellow-countrymen had been lost.

One great obstacle to the admission of the view we have thus taken, is the account of the conduct of the defenders of Jerusalem given by Josephus, which is our only source of information on the subject. But it must be remembered that Josephus knew nothing of what transpired within the city, excepting from the fragmentary and exaggerated reports of deserters or prisoners, or of those who survived the slaughter when it was captured. And, according to his own account, he was a man who, having accepted a command in the army of the insurgents, and having unsuccessfully defended a besieged fortress, had afterwards gone over to the Romans, accompanying first Vespasian, and afterwards Titus during their campaigns, and acting as their confidant and adviser. His History, too, before publication, was submitted to the approval and correction of his Imperial patrons. It would be a matter of course, therefore, that he should give such an account of the events of the war as to justify his desertion of the popular cause, and place in the most favourable light the conduct of the Roman generals. Had we a narrative from any of the leaders of the defence, we should not only find him branded as a renegade and a traitor, who had sold himself to the implacable foes of his nation for safety and promotion, but we should have a very different, and probably far truer, account of the manner in which the defence was conducted. That in proportion as affairs became

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, II. E., B. iii. c. 5, and note of Valesius.

desperate, the more violent should come to the front; that the counsels of prudence should be spurned, and denounced as cowardice, and even as treason; that panic should breed cruelty; and that in the mad impulses that fear and suffering engendered, there should be occasionally no nice discrimination of victims—all this is what we may believe; for these are the natural and ordinary results of such a position. But we may believe also that there was another and a brighter side to the picture: heroic endurance of suffering and contempt of danger; prudence, foresight, self-denial, unwearied vigilance, and undaunted valour. These, very probably, were the essential features of the defence, and the scenes of horror depicted by Josephus may have been but the distorted representations of what were only occasional episodes. We are not, indeed, in a position to restore the true history of the siege, and to show the real character of its incidents, either within or without the city. But we are in a position to say that the account we do possess is liable to suspicions which very gravely detract from its weight as an authority; for the writer had few reliable sources of information, and he had powerful motives to misrepresent facts, even as they were reported to him.

With the capture of Jerusalem terminates the importance of the church of that place. It had endured long enough to give form and consistency to the organization of the Christian society, and to fix the principles upon which it was to be governed. From the settlement of the church at Antioch by Barnabas to the death of James was probably more than twenty years, and during this period churches were founded and regulated by the Apostles, or by men whom they had commissioned or sanctioned, and were governed in accordance with rules laid down by the mother church. This church was the ultimate arbiter in questions of doctrine and discipline, so that even Paul was compelled to recognize its authority, submitting to the tests which it imposed. And we may be sure that where he submitted, few or none others would think of resisting. Possibly, then, its



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destruction removed restraints which might have impeded the free growth of the society. But it also permitted the unchecked development of those speculations with regard to the nature of Christ, and his relation to the Father, which have since proved the fertile source of division and strife, and have done so much to repel or alienate men who decline to submit their reason to the dictates of an ignorant and fanatical majority, assuming to determine by vote questions which are utterly beyond the power of man even to understand. Probably, however, had it subsisted, it would have proved powerless to arrest the tendency to dogmatize upon these subjects, or to alter the manner in which the questions were decided, and would itself have been excluded as heretical, as were its successors. But it appears to have rendered essential services to Christianity, which modern writers are too apt to overlook, and which, consequently, it is only just to recall to recollection.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE TO CHAPTER III., p. 135.

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DR. KEIM, in his *Jesus of Nazara* (Vol. I. p. 54, Eng. trans.), seems to regard the expression "after the flesh" as indicating a personal knowledge of Jesus in his life-time; but there appears no ground for such a view, for the line of argument and the language employed both exclude it. When Christ died, then all died with him—not literally, but symbolically; and this symbolical death implied the cessation of knowledge according to the flesh, as well as of a life according to the flesh. And it is this fleshly conception of the nature, or person, or mission of Christ that Paul renounces. Had he been speaking of a bodily knowledge, produced by sight, hearing, or touch, he would have used the word "body," as he does subsequently in the same Epistle (xii. 2, 3). And there would, on this hypothesis, be no meaning in the "henceforth." Paul had long ceased to know Christ after the flesh, not voluntarily, as he here implies, but of compulsion, by the fact of his crucifixion. The visions, or rather vision (for he only speaks of one in his letters), with which he had been favoured, certainly could not be supposed to involve a knowledge after the flesh. And in what manner was Paul to cease to know other men bodily? If he could not any longer know Christ in that manner by reason of his having ascended into heaven, they at least must still continue to impress their presence upon him through his senses.







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